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MISCELLANEOUS ESSAYS

SECOND SERIES

BY

W. R. GREG

LONDON:
TRÜBNER & CO., LUDGATE HILL.
1884.

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I.

FRANCE SINCE 1848.[1]

FRANCE is, κατ' ἐξοχήν, the land of experiment, as England is the land of compromise. There is scarcely a religious, political, or social experiment she has not tried; scarcely a religious, political, or social phase which she has not passed through. The form of Romanism in its narrowest and harshest bigotry which she exhibited towards the close of the reign of Louis XIV., was exchanged under his successors for a wild, angry, aggressive infidelity. This in its turn was succeeded by a cold and contemptuous indifference, which is now giving place to a somewhat more hopeful spirit in the poetical and mystical faith of Lamennais and Lamartine among the adherents of the old creed, and to the stiff and dogmatic opinions of Guizot, Coquerel, and Quinet among the votaries of the new. In polity France was at one time a military aristocracy, when the Guises and the Condés were almost the equals of the reigning prince. Richelieu, Mazarin, and Louis XIV. curbed the power of these rival potentates, and established a central and relentless despotism, which lasted till 1789, and was then followed in rapid succes-

[1] From the "North British Review, May 1851."
Revue des deux Mondes. Paris: 1849, 1850.

sion by the most democratic of republics and the most stern of military empires,—by a restoration, a second revolution, a constitutional limited monarchy, a third revolution, and an anomalous, ambiguous, tottering republic. The social changes which the country has undergone have been no less startling. Vassals and serfs till sixty years ago, the people suddenly became, first, the equals, then the tyrants of their former masters; and after losing their power under the empire, and being firmly repressed under the succeeding dynasties, they saw Communism for one short period actually triumphant and in power, and are still struggling to replace it at the Luxembourg. The middle classes, non-existent or insignificant under the old monarchy, and unwisely despised by Napoleon, have been dominant since 1830, and promise to remain so still; while the aristocracy, formerly the proudest and mightiest in Europe, have sunk into apparently hopeless impotence, retaining even their titles with difficulty, and in occasional abeyance. Hitherto, in all the manifold forms which her government and her society have assumed, France has been almost equally unfortunate: she has travelled round the whole circle of national possibilities, aud like Milton's Satan, has contrived constantly "to ride with darkness."

When the revolution of 1848 once more summoned her to the task of reconstruction, that task was far more difficult than at any former period. In 1789 her course was comparatively clear, and her materials comparatively rich. There were scandalous and universally

recognised abuses to be removed; enormous grievances to be redressed; shameful oppressions to be cancelled; and rights long and cruelly withheld to be conferred. There might be danger in all these changes; but the changes were rendered necessary by decency and justice; and the necessity was clearly seen. The old theories of government and society were to be swept away, but the new ones had been long ready to take their place. Men might be mistaken as to the value of the objects they had at heart, and might overestimate the advantages which were to flow from their attainment; but they had no doubt or confusion as to what these objects were. They knew what they wanted. The enthusiasm of the reformers might be irrational, and their faith fanatical; but they *had* a faith and an enthusiasm as earnest as ever carried martyrs unflinching to the stake. They had a new political framework to construct, but they had the constituent elements of that framework ready to their hand: they had an existing though a damaged monarchy; they had an aristocracy, frivolous, corrupt, and haughty, but still retaining some of the better elements of nobility within its bosom, and numbering many generous and worthy men among its ranks; and they had a *tiers-état*, indignant at past oppressions, thirsting for the promised freedom, energetic, trusting, simple, and with a loyalty not yet utterly extinguished. The court, the clergy, the high nobility were discredited and corrupt; but corruption had not yet penetrated the heart of the common people. They had a hard task to fulfil, but the means of its ac-

complishment were within reach: there was devotion, energy, and zeal in ample measure—there was high virtue and aspiring genius—there was eloquence of the loftiest order, and courage tried in many a conflict, all girding up their loins and buckling on their armour for the struggle.

In 1799, the task was a clearer and a ruder one still—it was simply to replace an anarchy of which all were sick and weary, by a strong government of any kind. In 1830, it was simply to enthrone a monarch who would govern according to the law, in the place of one who sought to govern by his own foolish and wicked will. But in 1848, when to the amazement of all and with scarcely any note of warning, the monarch fled and the dynasty and the constitution crumbled away like dust; and when the social as well as the political structure seemed to be resolved into its original elements, France saw before it a labour of a far more herculean cast, surrounded with far more formidable difficulties, and demanding a profounder wisdom. It was not the reconstruction of a shattered cabinet—it was not the restoration of a fallen dynasty—it was not even the reform and purification of a partial and perverted constitution:—it was the re-edification of society itself,—of a society corrupt to its very core,—in which all the usual constituents of the social edifice were poisoned, damaged, discredited, or non-existent—in which the monarchy was despised—in which the aristocracy was powerless—in which the clergy was without influence or general respect—in which the leading poli-

ticians could not furnish forth a single man able to command the confidence of the people—in which the middle classes were hopelessly selfish and devoted to material interests, and the mass of the lower orders were enduring severe privations, and swayed to and fro by the wildest theories and the most impracticable aspirations.

The purely political difficulties which presented themselves to the reconstructing statesmen of 1848, were the least they had to encounter. Yet these were embarrassing enough. When James II. abdicated or was dismissed from the English throne in 1688, he had only one rival and possible successor. The nation, too, as far as it could be said to be divided at all, was divided between the adherents of James and those of William of Orange. The old parties of Cromwell's days were extinct or powerless. But in France there were, and are still, four distinct parties,—any two of them capable by their junction of paralysing and checkmating the others,—any three of them, by their union, able to overpower and drive out the fourth. There were the old Legitimists, who acknowledged no monarch but the exiled Count de Chambord; not strong in numbers, or in influence, or in genius; inexperienced and unskilful in political action, and singularly defective in political sagacity; strangely blind to the signs of the times; living in dreams of the past and visions of the future;—but strong in this one point, that they alone of all the parties which divided France, had a living political faith, firm religious convictions, earnest an-

cestral and traditional affections, a distinct principle to fight for, and an acknowledged banner to rally round. Though not numbering many adherents or vassals even in the remoter and less altered provinces, their position in society as the undoubted heads of the polite and fashionable world, and embracing the oldest and most respected families of the ancient aristocracy, gave them a certain influence which, much as the prestige of high birth has been dissipated in France, was still not inconsiderable.

Next to them came the Imperialists—those whom recollections of former glory, and worship of the memory of the most wonderful man of modern times, attached to anything that bore the name or the impress of Napoleon. Their chief strength lay in the army, whose veterans looked upon their great captain almost as on a demigod, whose soldiers had known no spoil, and whose marshals no glory, since the empire had departed, whose thoughts were always dwelling on the campaigns of Jena and Marengo, who were constantly thirsting to renew the triumphs of Austerlitz, and to wipe out the discomfiture of Waterloo. But, besides the army, this party could count a great number of adherents among the middle classes, who remembered how Napoleon had restored order and stability at home, while he extended the boundaries and the influence of France abroad; how he had opened by force new Continental markets for their produce; how he had stimulated industry, protected commerce, and covered the land with roads, bridges, and public institutions. Among the commercial people,

too, there were many who regretted the times when commissaries and contractors grew wealthy in a single year, and when a hardy speculation or a glorious campaign supplied wherewithal to found and endow a family. The peasantry of France, too, were Buonapartists almost to a man, as far as they had any political predilections at all. It was Napoleon who had reorganised society after the horrors of the revolution. If it was Napoleon who had taken their sons and brothers as conscripts, it was he also who had led them on to renown, and often to wealth and distinction. He wrote his name indelibly on the very soil in every department of France; his is literally the only name known in the agricultural provinces and among the ignorant and stationary cultivators of the land. The demagogues who agitated France and the ruffians who ruined her before his time, as well as the monarchs who have ruled her since, have passed away and left no trace,—but Napoleon is remembered and regretted everywhere; his is the only fame which has survived the repeated catastrophes of sixty years, and floats uningulfed on the waters of the deluge. Many of the peasantry have never realised his death. Many even believe, incredible as it may seem, that it is he himself who now rules France. The overwhelming majority which elected Louis Napoleon to the Presidency surprised no one who has had an opportunity of conversing with the peasantry in the less visited districts of the country.

The third party was the Orleanists, or adherents of

the existing dynasty. They were numerous and powerful, and comprised many sections. They included a great majority of the middle ranks, nearly the whole of the commercial classes, and five-sixths of the practical, sober, and experienced politicians of the land. Besides those who were attached to the government by long connection, by old habit, by services rendered or benefits received, the Orleans dynasty rallied round it all the friends of constitutional liberty, all admirers of the English system, all who hoped by means of the charter —imperfect and mutilated as it was—and of the two Chambers—restricted as was the suffrage, and corrupt as was often the influence brought to bear upon the elections—gradually to train France to a purer freedom, and a higher degree of self-government; to tide over the period of national boyhood and inexperience, and navigate the vessel of the state through the rocks and shoals which menaced it, into smoother waters and more tranquil times;—all the moneyed men, too, to whom confusion, uncertainty, and change are fraught with impoverishment and ruin; all that class, so numerous, especially in Paris, who lived by supplying the wants of travellers and foreign residents; all whose idol was order, by whatever means it might be enforced, and at whatever price it might be purchased, and who saw no chance of peace or stability save under Louis Philippe's rule; and, finally, all belonging to that vast and indescribable section of every nation, who owned no allegiance, who worshipped no ideal, who sacrificed to no principle, whom Dante has scorched with his withering

contempt, as neither good nor bad, but simply, and before everything, selfish. The strength of this party lay in its wealth, in its political experience, in its cultivation of the material interests of the country, in the sympathy of England, and in all those nameless advantages which long possession of the reins of power, under a government of centralisation, never fails to confer.

Lastly, came the Republicans, divided, like the Orleanists, into many sections. There were the republicans on principle—stern, honest, able, and uncompromising, of whom Cavaignac may be taken as the living, and Armand Carrel as the departed, type. They had clear, though often wild, conceptions of liberty—an intelligible, though an impracticable, political theory; they worshipped a noble, though generally a classical, ideal, for which they were as ready to die and to kill, as any martyr who was ever bound to the stake. They belonged to the same order of men as the Cromwells and the Harrisons of England, and the Balfours of Scotland, with the difference, that their fanaticism was not religious, but political. Still they were, for the most part, estimable for their character, respectable in talents, and eminently formidable from the concentrated and resolute determination of their zeal.—There were the republicans by temperament—the young, the excitable, and the poetic, who longed for an opportunity of realising the dreams of their fancy, whose associations of freedom and renown all attached themselves to the first phase of the old revolution, and whose watchword was "the year 1793." Such are to be found in nearly

all countries. Their mental characteristic belongs rather to the time of life, than to the nation or the age. Still they have played a prominent part in all French convulsions. The Ecole Polytechnique has an historical fame.—Then there were the Socialist republicans, whose hostility was directed less against any dynasty or form of government, than against the arrangements of society itself; who conceived that the entire system of things was based upon a wrong foundation, and who saw, in the overthrow of existing powers, the only chance of remodelling the world after their fashion. Of these Louis Blanc was the leader; and among his followers were hundreds of thousands of the operative classes, soured and maddened with privations, thirsty for enjoyment, and intoxicated with the brilliant and beautiful perspective so eloquently sketched out before them—but, for the most part sincere, well-meaning, ignorant, and gullible, and easily dazzled and misled to wrong by the lofty and sonorous watchwords which their mischievous guides knew so well how to pronounce.—Lastly, there were the wretches who in troubled times come at the heels of every party, to soil its banner, to disgrace its fortunes, to stain its name—who profit by its victory, and slink away from it in defeat. The idle, who disdained to labour; the criminal, who lived by plunder; the savage, whose element was uproar; men who hated every government, because they had made themselves amenable to the laws of all; thieves and murderers, whom the galley and the prison had disgorged—all those obscene and

hideous constituents stalked forth from their dens to swell the ranks of the republicans, and to pillage and slay in the name of the republic.

Such were the political parties, in the midst of whose noisy and furious hostility France was called upon to constitute a strong and stable government, on the morrow of that amazing catastrophe, which, on the 24th of February 1848, had upset a constitution, chased away a dynasty, and left society itself in a state of abeyance, if not of dissolution. The provisional authorities—partly self-elected, partly voted in by acclamation, partly foisted in by low and impudent intrigue—had proclaimed a republic, without waiting to give the nation time to express its volition in the matter, and without any intention of deferring to this volition even when expressed. To establish and consolidate a republican form of government was thus the task assigned to the country;—a task which the existence of the several parties we have enumerated would alone have sufficed to make perplexing and difficult enough. But impediments far more serious were behind. All things considered, the problem was probably the hardest ever set before a nation:—to reconstruct society on a stable foundation, with all the usual elements of society absent or broken up,—without a monarch, without an aristocracy, without a religion,—with no principle unquestioned, with no truth universally admitted and reverenced, with no time-honoured institution left standing amid the ruins. She had to do all this, and more, in spite of nearly every obstacle which the past and the

present could gather round her, and in the absence of nearly every needed instrument for the work. With antecedents in her history—with monuments on her soil—with arrangements in her social structure—with elements in her national character — which seemed peremptorily to forbid and exclude republicanism, she endeavoured to construct a republic, and seemed resolved to be satisfied with nothing else. With no honest, high-minded, or venerated statesmen, standing out like beacon-lights among the multitude, whom all were emulous to love, honour, and obey, she was called upon to undertake a work which only the loftiest intellects, operating upon the most trusting and submissive people, could satisfactorily accomplish. She set herself to rival and surpass, in their most difficult achievements, nations that differed from her in nearly every element of their national life. With a pervading military spirit—with a standing force of nearly half a million, and an armed and trained population amounting to two millions more—with a centralised despotic bureaucracy—with Versailles and the Tuilleries ever recalling the regal magnificence of former days—with an excitable temper, an uncommercial spirit, and a subdivided soil—she is endeavouring to imitate and exceed that political liberty, and hoping successfully to manage those democratic institutions, which have been the slow and laborious acquisitions of Britain, with her municipal habits and her liberal nobility; of America, with her long-trained faculty of self-government, her boundless and teeming territory, and her universally

diffused material well-being; of Switzerland, with her mountainous regions and her historic education; and of Norway, with her simple, hardy, and religious population, and her barren and untempting soil.

Let us look a little more closely into a few of those peculiarities in the national character and circumstances, which appear to render the present struggles of the French after a constitution at once stable and democratic, so difficult if not so hopeless.

And, first, as to RACE. Races of men, like individuals, have their distinct type, their peculiar genius, which is the product of their origin, their physiological organisation, their climate, and the development of civilisation through which they have passed,—which is, in fact, their inheritance from ancient times. Few European nations are of pure blood; almost all contain several elements, and are the more sound and vigorous for the admixture. The French and the English have in common something of the Norman and something of the Teutonic blood; but in England the prevailing element is the Saxon sub-variety of the Teutonic; in France the prevailing element is the Gallic sub-variety of the Celtic. From our Norman conquerors we derive that intellectual activity, that high resolve, those habits of conquest and command, so characteristic of our upper ranks, and which have spread by intermarriage through all classes. From our German forefathers we inherit our phlegm, our steadiness, our domestic habitudes, and our unhappy addiction to spirituous liquors.

The predominance of Frank and Norman blood gave to the old aristocracy of France those generous and noble qualities which so long distinguished the class; but since it was submerged in the great deluge which desolated the closing years of the last century, the Celtic element which pervades the great mass of the people has shone forth paramount and nearly unmodified. Now, the Teuton and the Celt have characteristics and capacities wholly dissimilar. According to the masterly analysis of our first ethnographical authority, M. Gustaf Kombst, the distinctive marks of the former are slowness but accuracy of perception, a just, deep, and penetrating, but not quick or brilliant intellect. The distinctive peculiarities of the Celt, on the contrary, are quickness of perception, readiness of combination, wit, and fertility of resource. The passion of the Celt is for national power and grandeur; that of the Teuton for personal freedom and self-rule. The Teuton is hospitable, but unsocial and reserved; the Celt is immoderately fond of society, of amusement, and of glory. The one is provident and cautious; the other impetuous and rash. The one values his own life, and respects that of others; the other sets little value upon either. Respect for women is the characteristic of the Teuton; passion for women the characteristic of the Celt.[1] The latter is intemperate in love; the former is intemperate in wine. The fancy of the one is sensuous; that of the

[1] Dr Kombst remarks, as a constant fact, the existence of Foundling Hospitals among Celtic nations, and their absence among those of Teutonic origin.

other ideal. Lastly, the religious element presents diverse manifestations in the two races;—in the Celt there is a latent tendency towards polytheism, while the Teuton displays a decided preference for monotheistic views;—Romanism retains an almost unshaken hold over the former; Protestantism has achieved its victories exclusively among the latter.

Now, these distinctions are not fancies of our own, derived from a glance at France, Germany, and England, under their present phases; they are taken on the authority of a philosopher, whose conclusions are the result of long study, and of the widest range of observation. The general accuracy of the delineation will be generally acknowledged, and can scarcely fail to impress us with the improbability that institutions which are indigenous among one of these great divisions of humanity should flourish and survive when they are transplanted into the other. Self-government, and the forms and appliances of political freedom, are plants of native growth in England and America; they are only delicate and valuable exotics in France. These national discrepancies manifest themselves in public life in a thousand daily forms. The Englishman is practical, business-like, and averse to change; his imagination, though powerful, is not easily excited; his views and aims are positive, unideal, and distinct. The Frenchman is ambitious, restless, and excitable — aspiring after the perfect; *passionné pour l'inconnu;* prone to "*la récherche de l'absolu;*" constantly, as Lamartine says, wrecking his chance or his possession of the good

"*par l'impatience du mieux.*" The Englishman, in his political movements, knows exactly what he wants; his object is definite, and is generally even the recovery of something that has been lost, the abolition of some excrescence or abuse, the recurrence to some venerated precedent. The Frenchman is commonly aroused by the vague desire of something new, something vast, something magnificent; he prefers to fly to evils that he knows not of, rather than to bear those with which he is familiar. His golden age beckons to him out of the untried and unrealised future; ours is placed almost as baselessly, but far less dangerously, in the historic past. The Frenchman is given to scientific definitions and theories in politics; the Englishman turns on all such things a lazy and contemptuous glance. The former draws up formal declarations of the rights of man, but has an imperfect understanding of his own, and is apt to overlook those of others; the latter never descants on his rights, but exercises them daily as a matter of course, and defends them stoutly when attacked. The one is confident in his own opinion, though he be almost alone in his adhesion to it; the other has always a secret misgiving that he is wrong when he does not agree with the majority, All these are so many criteria of the possession of that "political instinct," that native aptitude for administrative business, the defect of which in the French people has hitherto rendered all their attempts at a working constitution so abortive,

Next, as to RELIGION,—the absence of which as a

pervading element is a deplorable feature of the national character of France. The decay of her religious spirit dates from the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. That fatal measure, while it banished Protestantism, struck Romanism with impotence and a paralytic languor. "The Gallican Church, no doubt, looked upon this revocation as a signal triumph. But what was the consequence? Where shall we look after this period for her Fénélons and her Pascals? where for those bright monuments of piety and learning which were the glory of her better days? As for piety, she perceived that she had no occasion for it, when there was no longer any lustre of Christian holiness surrounding her; nor for learning, when there were no longer any opponents to confute or any controversies to maintain. She felt herself at liberty to become as ignorant, as secular, as irreligious as she pleased; and amidst the silence and darkness she had created around her she drew the curtains and retired to rest."[1] To the forced and gloomy bigotry which marked the declining years of Louis Quatorze succeeded the terrible reaction of the regency and the following reigns. Amid the orgies of weary and satiated profligacy arose first a spirit of scoffing, then of savage, vindictive, and aggressive scepticism. The whole intellect of that acute and brilliant people ranged itself on the side of irreligion; and nothing was left to oppose to the wits, the philosophers, and the encyclopedists, save cold prosings which it was a weariness to listen to, frauds and

[1] Robert Hall—Review of "Zeal without Innovation."

fictions which it would have been imbecility to credit, pretensions which the growing enlightenment of the age laughed to scorn, and the few rags of traditional reverence which the indolent, luxurious, and profligate lives of the clergy were fast tearing away. The unbelief of the higher ranks spread rapidly to those below them: some were unbelievers from conviction, some from fashion, some from a low and deplorable ambition to ape their superiors. "Bien que je ne suis qu'un pauvre coiffeur," said a hair-dresser to his employer one day in 1788, "je n'ai plus de croyance qu'un autre." But worse than this, all that was warm or generous in human sympathies, all that was hopeful or promising for human progress, all that was true and genuine in native feeling, was found on the side of the philosophers. Religion ranged itself on the side of ignorance and despotism. Scepticism fought the battle of justice, of science, of political and civil freedom. The philosophers had truth and right on their side in nearly everything but their assaults on Christianity; and the Christianity then presented to the nation was scarcely recognisable as snch. The result of these unnatural and unhappy combinations has been that religion has been indissolubly associated in the mind of the French with puerile conceits, with intellectual nonsense, with political oppression; while infidelity wears in their eyes the cap of liberty, the robes of wisdom, the civic crown of patriotic service.

Even the shocking license into which atheism wandered under the republic produced nothing more

genuine or deep than the reaction towards decency under Napoleon. The nation remained at heart either wholly indifferent or actively irreligious; and such, in spite of growing exceptions, it continues to this day, by the confession of those even among its own people who know it best. The two reigns of the Restoration, and that of Louis Philippe, rather aggravated than mitigated the evil. The effect of this national deficiency in the religious element, is to augment to a gigantic height the difficulty of building up either society or government in France. Its noxious operation can scarcely be overrated. The foundation-rock is gone; the very basis is a shifting quicksand. The habitual reverence for a Supreme Being, whose will is law, and whose laws are above assault, question, or resistance; the sense of control and the duty of obedience which flow from this first great conviction,—lie at the bottom of all community and all rule; without these it is difficult to see how the constructive task can even be commenced.

The absence of a fundamental and pervading religious faith has shown itself in France in two special consequences, either of which would suffice to make the work set before them not merely herculean, but nearly hopeless. The first is this:—France prides herself upon being a land in which pure reason is the only authority extant. She has no *prejudices* to lie at the root of her philosophy, no doctrine settled and universally adopted and laid by as an everlasting possession,—a κτημα ἐς ἀει, —in the sacred archives of the nation. She has no *axioms* which it would be insanity or sacrilege to question,

Everything is matter for speculation, for doubt, for discussion. The very opinions which, with all other people, have long since passed into the category of first principles, are with her still themes for the wit of the saloon and the paradoxical declamation of the school-boy. The simplest and clearest rules of duty, the most established maxims of political and moral action, the assumptions, or the proved premises which lie at the root of all social arrangements, dogmatic facts the most ancient and widely recognised, have in France every morning to be considered and discussed anew. Every belief and opinion, without exception, is daily re-manded into the arena of question and of conflict. Topics the most frivolous and the most sacred, truths the most obvious and the most recondite, doctrines the clearest and the most mystical, are perpetually summoned afresh before the judgment-seat of logic, till none can by any possibility obtain a firm and undisputed hold upon the mind. The fact is not wonderful, though its consequences are enormously pernicious. It is the inherited misfortune of a generation which has grown up in the vortex of a political and moral whirlpool, where nothing was stable, nothing permanent; where it was impossible to point to a system, an institution, or a creed, *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus;* where one philosophy after another chased its predecessor from the stage; where one form of government was scarcely seated on the throne before its successor drove it into exile; where, in a word, there was not a

school, a doctrine, or a dynasty, of which men of mature age (to use the fine and pathetic language of Grattan) had not "rocked the cradle and followed the hearse,"—not an institution extant and surviving of which nearly every one alive could not remember the time when *it was not.* The result of all this has been that an entirely different class of subjects from those ordinarily agitated in settled countries has come up. Instead of discussing whether a monarch should govern or only reign, they are discussing whether the lowest and most ignorant orders of the mob should not have the actual sovereignty in their hands. Instead of considering modifications in the laws of landed inheritance, they are disputing whether the very institution of property be not in itself a robbery. Instead of differing on details of the law of marriage and divorce, they are bringing into question the subject of family ties, and the relation between the sexes in its entirety. Their struggles are not on behalf of religious liberty, nor for this Church, nor for that sect, but for or against those fundamental ideas which are common to all creeds alike. It is not such or such a political innovation, such or such a social or hierarchical reform which form the subject of habitual controversy; it is the religious, political, and moral ground-work of society that is at stake and in dispute.

We are here at once led to the recognition of that great fact which explains, better than any divergence of historic antecedents, or any dissimilarity of

national character, the startling contrast between the failure of the French Revolution, and the successes of that great English movement of the seventeenth century which corresponds to it. M. Guizot, with his accustomed sagacity, has in his last work placed his finger upon this distinction, though he abstains from following out a contrast so painful and unfavourable to his countrymen. The French Revolution followed on a sceptical and philosophic movement of men's minds. The English Revolution followed on a period of deep religious excitement. The English revolutionists were even more attached to their religious faith than to their political opinions. They fought for liberty of conscience even more fiercely than for civil rights. "Ce fut la fortune de l'Angleterre au xvii^e^ siècle, que l'esprit de foi religieuse et l'esprit de liberté politique y régnaient ensemble. Toutes les grandes passions de la nature humaine se déployèrent ainsi *sans qu'elle brisât tous ses freins.*" The English political reformers were pious Christians, whose faith was an earnest, stimulating, exalting, strengthening reality; —the French political reformers, on the other hand, were atheists, brought up in the school of the Encyclopedists to despise and deride all that other men held sacred, whose passions, interests, and prejudices, therefore, found no internal impediment to their overflow. The Puritans unquestionably were bold reformers of religious matters as well as of political ones; they indeed attacked and overthrew the established creed, while retaining intact the common

principles of the Christian faith; but in the midst of their successes—in the chaos of ruins both of temples and palaces which, like Samson, they heaped round them—there was something left always standing which all sects reverenced and spared. They still, as M. Guizot beautifully says, recognised and bowed down before *a law which they had not made.* It was this law which they had not made—this boundary wall not built with hands—which was wanting to the French reformers: to them everything was human; on no side did they meet an obstacle, acknowledged as divine, which commanded them to stop in their career of conquest and destruction. The consequence was, that in the one case the *bouleversement* reached only the secondary and derivative,—in the other, it embraced the primitive, fundamental, and indispensable institutions of social life.

The second special operation of French irreligion on society may be thus explained: — The thirst after happiness is natural to the human heart, and inseparable from its healthy action. After this happiness we all strive, though with every imaginable difference as to the intensity of our desire, and the conception of our aim, —as to the scene in which we locate it, and the means we employ to arrive at it. The cultivated, the virtuous, and the wise, place their happiness in the gratification of the affections, and the development of the intellectual and moral powers. Material welfare they value indeed, but they pursue it with a moderate and restrained desire. To the ignorant and the sensual, happiness consists in physical enjoyment and the possession of the

good things of life. The paradise of the religious man is laid in a future and spiritual world; that of the unbeliever—practical or theoretic—in some earthly Eden. On the belief or disbelief in the immortality of the soul, will practically depend both the nature and the locality of the heaven we desire. Now the French—that is, that active and energetic portion of them which gives the tone to the whole people—repudiate the doctrine of a future life, and yet are vehement aspirants after enjoyment. They are well described by one of themselves as "*passionés pour le bonheur matériel.*" The effect of the disbelief in a future world is, of course, not only to turn all their desires and efforts after happiness upon this, but to make their conception of the happiness of this life essentially and exclusively earthly, and to cause them to pursue it with the impatience, the hurry, the snatching avidity of men who feel that *now or never is their time*, that every moment that elapses before their object is grasped is a portion of bliss lost to them for ever. Those, who, however dissatisfied with their portion of this world's goods, still, like the majority—a decreasing majority we fear—of our English working classes, retain some belief in a future life, can strive after the improvement of their earthly lot with a more deliberate and less angry haste; for if they fail, their happiness is not denied, but only postponed to a more distant and a better day.

> "To them there never came the thought
> That this their life was meant to be
> A pleasure-house, where peace unbought
> Should minister to pride or glee.

"Sublimely they endure each ill
As a plain fact, whose right or wrong
They question not, confiding still
That it shall last not overlong :

"Willing, from first to last, to take
The mysteries of our life as given ;
Leaving the time-worn soul to slake
Its thirst in an undoubted heaven."

But if this earth is indeed all, then no time is to be lost, no excuse or delay is to be listened to. It is natural, it is logical, it is inevitable for those who hold this dreary creed to scout as insults those cautions as to the danger of going too fast, those maxims of wisdom which would assure us that social wellbeing is a plant of slow growth, that we must be satisfied with small and rare instalments of amelioration, that we must be content to sow the seed in this generation, and leave our children, or our children's children, to reap the fruit. These indisputable truths sound like cruel mockery to the man who, suffering under actual and severe privations, regards a future existence as the dream of the poet, or the invention of the priest.

The immeasurable and impatient appetite for material felicity, which is now one of the distinctive traits of French society, and which is the legitimate offspring of her irreligion, is beyond question the deepest and most dangerous malady which the State physician has to deal with; for the Frenchman is not only logical, but always ready and anxious to translate his logic into practice. If our lot is to be worked out, and our nature to receive its full development on earth, we must set to work at

once, at all hazards, and in spite of all obstacles, to construct that present paradise which is to be our only one. One of the historians of the recent revolution, who writes under the pseudonyme of Daniel Sterne, has the following just remark :—" S'il est vrai de dire que le socialisme semble au premier abord une extension du principe de fraternité, apporté au monde par Jesus-Christ, il est en même temps et surtout une réaction contre le dogme essentiel du Christianisme, la Chute et l'Expiation. On pourrait, je crois, avec plus de justesse, considérer le socialisme comme une tentative pour *matérialiser* et *immédiatiser*, si l'on peut parler ainsi, la vie future et le paradis spirituel des Chrétiens." Hence these Socialist and Communistic schemes, those plans for the re-organisation of society on a new and improved footing, which have taken such a strong hold on the imagination and affection of the French *prolétaires*. Hence the eagerness and ready credulity with which they listen to any orators or theorists who promise them, by some royal road, some magic change, the wellbeing which they believe to be both attainable and their due. Hence, too, that daring, unscrupulous, unrelenting impetuosity, with which these social iconoclasts emulate the fanaticism of religious sectaries, and drive their car of triumph over ranks and institutions, over principalities and powers, over all the rich legacies and pathetic associations of the past, as remorselessly as did the daughter of Servius over the scarce lifeless body of her father.

This passion for material wellbeing —this " haste to

be happy"—is by no means confined to the socialist schemers or the operative classes. It pervades ranks far above them, more especially those members of the *bourgeoisie* who have entered the liberal professions without any means or qualifications except natural aptitude and intellectual culture; the advocates, surgeons, artists, journalists, and men of letters. These are described by one who knows them well as the section of French society whose material condition is the most unsatisfactory and incongruous, while the influence they exert on the fortunes of the country is the most powerful. Their life is a combination of revolting contrasts,—a feverish and perpetual struggle. Their cultivated intellect, their excited fancy, raise them every moment to a dazzling height, and show them in dreams all the felicities and grandeurs of the earth; while their waking hours "must stoop to strive with misery at the door," and be passed in conflict with the anxieties and humiliations of actual indigence or uncertain remuneration. They live in daily contact with men, their superiors in power and wealth, their equals or inferiors in character, in talent, or in cultivation; and the comparison disgusts them with inequalities of fortune, and the gradations of the social hierarchy. Their ambition, everywhere excited, and everywhere crushed back, finding in society as constituted, no clear field, no adequate recompense, no prizes satisfying to their wants or glorious enough for their conceptions, sets itself to the task of reconstructing society afresh, after the pattern of their dreams.

From this class are furnished the chiefs of the socialist and revolutionary movements;—men whose desires are at war with their destiny; and who in place of chastening and moderating the former, would refashion and reverse the latter.

There is yet another class, swayed by loftier motives, but pulling in the same direction. These are perhaps the most formidable of all, because their enthusiasm is of a more unselfish order, and flows from a purer spring. These are men of high powers and a fine order of mind, with little faith, or at most only a mystical and dreamy one, in God or in futurity, but overflowing with generous sympathies and worshipping a high ideal,—shocked and pained with the miseries they see around them, and confident in their capability of cure. They are a sort of political Werthers, profoundly disgusted with the actual condition of the world; the lofty melancholy, inseparable from noble minds, broods darkly over their spirits; an indescribable sadness

"Deepens the murmur of the falling floods;"—

they are disenchanted with life, and hold it cheap, for it realises none of their youthful visions; they deem that this world ought to be a paradise, and believe it might be made such; and, feeling existence to be not worth having, unless the whole face of things can be renewed, and the entire arrangements of society changed, they are prepared to encounter anything, and to inflict anything, for the promotion of such change. Hence obstacles do not deter them—sacri-

fices do not appal them—personal danger is absolutely beneath their consideration—and both in France and Germany we have seen them mount the barricades and fight in the streets with a contempt of death which was utterly amazing, and seemed to have nothing in common either with the vaunting heroism of the French soldier, or the systematic and stubborn courage of the English, or the hardy indifference of the Russian. France has martyrs still—martyrs as willing and enthusiastic as ever—but their cause is no longer that of old. Instead of martyrs who suffered death for freedom, for country, for religion, for devotion to the moral law, we have men ready to encounter martyrdom for objects scarcely worthy of the sacrifice, for the exigencies of the passions, for the conquest of material felicity, for the realisation of an earthly paradise.

The degree to which this universal and insatiable thirst for present and immediate enjoyment, and the schemes, associations, and ambitions to which it gives rise, must complicate the difficulties of any government formed at a time when such desires and such attempts at their realisation are rife, must be obvious at a glance. One special point which even aggravates these difficulties, we shall have to recur to presently.

Side by side with the absence of religion in France —partly as a consequence, partly as a co-existing effect of remoter causes, there prevailed a deep-seated torpor and perversion of moral principle. We do not mean that there was not much virtue, much

simple honesty, much conscientious adherence to the dictates of the moral sense, still to be found in many classes of the people, among the unsophisticated peasantry of the interior, among the scanty and scattered rural gentry who lived on their estates, and even among the artisan class of the cities. But a profound and mean immorality had spread its poisonous influence deep and wide through nearly all those ranks which, either directly or indirectly, act upon the government, and give the tone to the national character and the direction to the national policy. So obvious was this painful truth, that it escaped neither foreigner nor native ;—it led to a general and frequently expressed, though vague expectation, that some great catastrophe must be at hand; it was dimly felt that nearly all those warning signs—those mystic letters on the wall—by which Providence intimates approaching change, were visible on the face of French society; and we well remember that one individual, thoroughly conversant with that society in all its circles, distinctly predicted the revolution of February more than a year before it occurred, not on the ground of any political symptoms or necessities, but solely from the corruption of morals and manners which pervaded the higher and middle classes,—the politicians, the writers, the commercial men, the artists, the circles of fashion—all alike. License in all that concerned the relations between the sexes was no novelty in France—in this respect the profligacy of the Regency and the Directory could not be surpassed,

and indeed was not approached. But the high and scrupulous, though sometimes fantastic and inconsistent sense of honour, which formerly distinguished the French gentleman, seemed to be gone ; his regard for truth and even pecuniary integrity was deplorably weakened ; the "mire of dirty ways," whether in political life or in speculative business, no longer instinctively revolted his finer susceptibilities ;—that "sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt stain like a wound, which inspired valour, while it mitigated ferocity," had died away under the demoralising influence of the repeated social convulsions of the last sixty years. When religion has become an empty garment, and piety a faded sentiment, and loyalty extinct from want of nourishment, and when strict moral rules have thus lost their fixity and their sanctions, the spirit of a gentleman may for a time, in some measure, supply their place ; but if this also has died out, the last barrier to the overflow of the twin vices of licentiousness and barbarity is swept away.

The extent to which this spirit was extinguished was not known to the world till the filthy intrigues connected with the Spanish marriages (since so remorselessly laid bare by the publication of Louis Philippe's private letters), and the suicide of the diplomatic tool concerned in them, the Count de Bresson, out of pure disgust at the dirt he had been dragged through,—first exposed a degree of low turpitude, for which even France was scarcely prepared.

Then followed in quick succession the trial and conviction of a cabinet minister and a general officer for dishonesty and peculation in their official capacities, and the awful tragedy of the Duke de Choiseul-Praslin, a member of the highest nobility in France—the murder of his wife as an obstacle to his illegitimate desires, and his own subsequent suicide in prison. When, finally, a statesman and philosopher as high in rank and reputation as Guizot, expressed little surprise and no horror at the corrupt malversation of his former colleague M. Teste, and even consented to soil his lips in public with a quasi-lie, in order to defend the duplicity of his master,—a sort of shudder ran through the better circles of Europe,—a perception that the measure of iniquity was full, and that the time of retribution must be at hand. It was as if the book had been closed, and the awful fiat had gone forth:—"Ephraim is joined unto idols: *let him alone.*" "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: behold I come quickly, to give to every man according as his work shall be!"

The prevalent immorality showed itself to the French themselves in many minute symptoms which were unobservable by other nations,—in the looseness of domestic ties, in the grasping and gambling spirit of Parisian society, in the appearance of the *lionnes*, as they were called, and other extravagant indecorums of fashionable life; but to the world at large, it was chiefly signalised in the strange taste and monstrous

conceptions which degraded their popular and lighter literature, and in the general corruption which pervaded all departments of the administration. We very much question whether any period of history can furnish a parallel to the French fictitious and dramatic literature of the last twenty years. Former times may have furnished comedies more coarse, tragedies more brutal, novels more profligate; but none displaying a taste so utterly vicious, a style of sentiment so radically false and hollow, a tone and spirit so thoroughly *diseased*. Not only do voluptuous pictures everywhere abound; not only is the unrestrained indulgence of the natural passions preached up as venial, to say the least; not only is the conjugal tie habitually ridiculed or ignored; not only is genius ever busy to throw a halo of loveliness over the most questionable feelings, and the most unquestionable frailties;—but crimes of the darkest dye are chosen by preference, and with research, as the materials of their plot; criminals, black with every enormity which we hold most loathsome, are the picked and chosen favourites of the play-wright and the novelist; scenes, which the pure and refined mind shrinks even to dream of, are the commonest localities of their unholy delineations; —and the imagination of the writer is racked to devise the most unnatural occurrences, the most impossible combinations, the most startling horrors. This language sounds like exaggeration; but it will not be deemed such by any one who has even dipped into the cloaca of modern French fiction, from its more

moderate phase in Victor Hugo, to its culminating point in "Le Juif errant," and the "Mystères de Paris." The favourite plan—the supreme effort—of these writers is to conceive some marvellous event or combination which has no prototype in nature, and could never have presented itself to a sound or healthy fancy; to depict some monstrous criminal, and surround him with the aureole of a saint,—to describe some pure, beautiful, and perfect maiden, and place her, as her atmosphere and cradle, in the lowest and filthiest haunts, where barbarity nestles with licentiousness. Excitement—what the French call *une sensation*—is the one thing sought after; the object to which taste, decency, and artistic probabilities, are all sacrificed: or if any more serious idea and sentiment runs through this class of works, it is that of hostility to the existing arrangements of society,—its inequalities, its restraining laws, its few still unshattered sanctities. It is worthy of remark that Victor Hugo, the author of "Marion de L'Orme," "Lucrèce Borgia," "Bug-Jargal," and "Hans d'Islande," is a leader of the extreme party in the Chambers; that Eugene Sue, the author of "Atar-Gull," "Le Juif errant," and "Les Mystères du Peuple" is the chosen representative of the more turbulent socialists; and that George Sand (whom we grieve to class with these even for a moment) was the reputed friend and right hand of the desperate democratic tyrant, Ledru Rollin. Literature in France has become allied not only with democracy—that it may

well be without any derogation from its nobility—but with the lowest and most envious passions of the mob, with the worst and most meretricious tastes of the *coulisses* and the saloon. Its votaries and its priests seem to have alike forgotten that they had an ideal to worship, a high ministry to exercise, a sacred mission to fulfil. Excellence, for which in former times men of letters strove with every faculty of their devoted souls,—for the achievement of which they deemed no effort too strenuous, no time too long—is deposed from its "place of pride;" and success,—temporary, momentary, sudden success,—success among a class of readers whose vote can confer no garland of real honour, no crown of enduring immortality,—success, however tarnished, and by what mean and base compliances soever it be won,—is their sole object and reward.

The unwholesome and disordering sentiment which alone could flow from such a school is nearly all that the lighter intellect of France has had to feed upon for more than half a generation; and the corruption of the national taste and morals consequent upon such diet, is only too easily discernible. A passion for unceasing excitement, a morbid craving for mental stimulants thus constantly goaded and supplied, has rendered everything simple, genuine, and solid in literature, everything settled and sober in social relations, everything moderate, stable, and rigid in political arrangements, alike stale and flat. The appetite of the nation is diseased; and to minister to

this appetite, or to control and cure it, are the equally difficult and dangerous alternatives now offered to its rulers.

The second form in which the national demoralisation especially showed itself—at once a fatal symptom and an aggravating cause—was in the general administrative corruption which prevailed. This did not originate under Louis Philippe, but was beyond question vastly increased during his reign; and was not only not discouraged, but was actually stimulated by his personal example. The system of place-hunting—the universal mendicancy for public employment, which reached so shameless a height just before the last revolution, found in him one of its worst specimens. No jobbing or begging elector ever besieged the door of the minister for a tobacco-license, or a place in the customs or the passport office, with more impudent pertinacity, than Louis Philippe showed in persecuting the Chambers for *dotations* for his sons. Those who were conversant with the French ministerial bureaux declare, that it is difficult to imagine, and that it was impossible to behold without humiliation and disgust, the passionate covetousness, the mingled audacity and meanness, displayed among the candidates for place. *Everybody* seemed turned into a hanger-on of government, or a petitioner to become so: everybody was seeking a snug berth for himself or for his son, and vowing eternal vengeance against the government if he were refused. The system of civil administration in France

—the senseless multiplication of public functionaries —has to thank itself for much of this embarrassing and disreputable scramble. The number of places, more or less worth having, at the disposal of government, appears, by a late return to the Chamber, to exceed 535,000.

"Les Français," says a recent acute writer in the Revue des deux Mondes, "se précipitent vers les fonctions, parceque c'est la seule carrière qui guarantisse l'existence même médiocre, et qui permette la sécurité du lendemain. Dans l'espoir d'assurer à leurs enfans un émargement au budget, nous voyons chaque jour de petits capitalistes consacrer au frais de leur éducation une partie ou la totalité de leur mince héritage. Les fonctions publiques sont considérées comme une assurance sur la vie, ou un placement à fonds perdus. Une place exerce sur l'esprit des familles la même fascination que faisait autrefois une prébende ou un canonicat. Madame de Staël disait autrefois: 'Les Français ne seront satisfaits que lorsqu'on aura promulgué une constitution ainsi conçue; article unique: Tous les Français sont fonctionnaires?' Le socialisme ne fait que généraliser sous une autre forme la passion des Français pour les places, et réaliser, sous un autre nom, le mot de Madame de Staël. La Charte du droit au travail peut, en effet, s'énoncer en une seule phrase: Tous les citoyens sont salariés par l'état."

The number of electors in Louis Philippe's time was 180,000—the number of places in the gift of the Crown was 535,000; that is, there were three places available for the purpose of bribing each elector. Put this fact side by side with that passion for the position of a government *employé* which we have just described, and it will be obvious that the corruption must have been, as it was, systematic and universal. The electors regarded their votes as a means of purchasing a place. Each deputy was expected to

provide in this way for as many of his constituents as possible, and knew that his tenure of his seat depended upon his doing so. Of course he was not likely to forget himself: having purchased his seat, it was natural he should sell his vote. Thus the government bribed the Chambers, and the Chambers bribed the electoral body. Now, from this eleemosynary giving way of places, to *selling* them—from selling them for *support* to selling them for *money*—the step is short and easy.

Some important considerations have been suggested in mitigation of the culpability of Louis Philippe's government in thus corrupting both the candidates and the constituency,—to which, though not pretending to admit their entire justice, we may give whatever weight they may, on due reflection, seem to deserve. It is questionable (it has been said) whether representative institutions among a corrupt and turbulent people, or a people from any other causes unfit for self-government, do not *necessitate* bribery in some form. It was found so in Ireland: it was found so in those dark times of English history which elapsed from 1600 to 1760. The government of July found representative institutions already established, and was obliged to rule through their instrumentality. The ministers were in this position: a majority in the Chambers was essential to them, to the stability of their position, to the adequacy of their powers. This majority could not be secured, among an excitable and foolish people, by wise measures, by sound economy, by resolute behaviour; nor among a corrupt

and venal people, by purity of administration, or steady preference of obscure and unprotected merit. They were the creation of a revolution which their defeat might renew and perpetuate, and a renewal of which would be, to the last extent, disastrous to the country. They had, therefore, only two alternatives—either to distribute places with a view to the purchase of parliamentary votes, to hand over appointments to deputies for the purchase in their turn of electoral suffrages; or to enlarge the franchise to such an extent as to render bribery impossible, and so throw themselves on the chance which the good sense and fitness for self-rule of the mass of the people might afford them. This they had not nerve enough or confidence enough to do; and who that knows the French people, and has seen their conduct on recent occasions, will venture to say that they were wrong?

If the French nation were fit for representative institutions, if it had the sagacity, the prudence, the virtues needed for self-government, the latter ought to have been the course of the administration of July; if it had *not* (and who now will venture to pronounce that it had?), the administration had no choice but to command a majority by the only means open to them, viz., corruption. Representative institutions among a people unqualified for them can, therefore, only be worked by corruption, *i.e.*, by distributing the appointments at the disposal of the State with a view to the purchase of parliamentary or electoral support. What government, even in England or America, still less in

France—what government, in fact, in any country *not autocratically ruled*—could stand a month if all its appointments were distributed with regard to merit *alone;* if, for example, Lord Stanley refused office to Mr Disraeli or Lord John Manners because they were less competent to its duties than obscurer men; if Lord Lonsdale or the Duke of Newcastle had all their recommendations treated with merited disregard; if the members for Manchester or London saw their protégés contemptuously and rigidly set aside in favour of abler but less protected men? If corruption essentially consists, as it undeniably does, *in distributing the appointments and favours of the State otherwise than with a sole regard to merit and capacity*—if any deviation from this exclusive rule be corruption in a greater or less degree, then it is clear that some degree of corruption is inherent and inevitable in all representative governments, and that the extent to which it prevails will be in precise inverse proportion to the sagacity and self-denying virtue of the people, *i.e.*, to the degree in which they can endure to see meritorious strangers preferred to less deserving friends. Where, in modern times, shall we find that blended humility and patriotism, which made the rejected candidate for the Lacedemonian senate go home rejoicing (perhaps with a touch of quiet sarcasm in his tone), "that there were five hundred better men in Sparta than himself?" The people, therefore, and the institutions, not the rulers, are to blame for the amount of corruption which prevails. If they have the reins in their own hands, and yet cannot

guide themselves, they must be governed by circuitous stratagems instead of direct force—for governed *ab extra* they must be. *It is the exclusive prerogative of an autocratic government* to distribute appointments according to merit only. Corruption—*i.e.*, appointments not exclusively according to desert, but with ulterior views, to purchase or reward parliamentary support—is the price which must be paid for free institutions among an imperfect people.

There is much truth in this plea; a plea which will be recognised as valid by each individual, in proportion as he is conversant with administrative life; but it does not affect our argument. For, whether the government of France were excusable or not, the operation of the wholesale, systematic, and unblushing venality and scramble for place which prevailed, was equally indicative of, and destructive to, the morals of the community.

One result of all this—one of the saddest features of French national life, one of the darkest auguries for the future—is the low estimation in which all public men are held; the absence of any great, salient, unstained statesman, whom all reverenced, whom all could trust, and whom all honest citizens were willing to follow and obey: of any politician who, in times of trial, could influence and sway the people by the force of character alone. They are not only worse off than other nations, at similar crises of their history, they are worse off than themselves ever were before. They have not only no Pericles, no Hampden, no Washington; they have not even a Turgot, a Lafayette, or a Mirabeau. Three

only of their public men have been long enough and prominently enough before the world to have made themselves a European reputation—Guizot, Thiers, and Lamartine. All of these men have been at the head of affairs in turn; all are writers and historians of high fame; all are men of unquestioned genius; and two of them at least are types of a class. Thiers is a Provençal by birth, with all the restless excitability, all the *pétillante* vivacity, all the quenchless fire, all the shrewd, intriguing sagacity of the south. He launched into the mixed career of literature and politics at a very early age, and a characteristic anecdote is related of his first successes. The Academy of Aix, his native town, proposed the *Eloge de Vauvenargues* as the subject of their yearly prize. Thiers sent in an essay (anonymous, as was the rule) which was of paramount merit; but it was suspected to be his, and as he and his patron had many enemies, the academic judges proposed to postpone the adjudication of the prize till the following year, on the ground of insufficient merit in all the rival essays. Some days were yet wanting to the period of final decision. Thiers instantly set to work, and produced with great rapidity another essay on the same text, which he sent in with the post-mark of a distant town. The first prize was instantly adjudged to this, and the second only to the original production; and when both turned out to be the work of the same envied author, the academicians looked foolish enough. Shortly after this youthful stratagem Thiers came to Paris, the great rendezvous for all French talent, and

commenced life as a journalist—that line which in France so often leads to eminence and power. His clear, vivacious, and energetic style, and the singular vigour and frequent depth of his views, soon made him favourably known. His "Histoire de la Révolution" established his fame; and when, on the appointment of the Polignac ministry in 1829, he (in conjunction with Mignet and Carrel) established the "National" newspaper, with the express object of upsetting them, and pleading the cause of legal and constitutional monarchy against them, he was one of the acknowledged leaders of public opinion in France. The settled aim and plan of the three friends is thus epigrammatically stated by M. de St Beuve:—"*Enfermer les Bourbons dans la Charte, dans la Constitution, fermer exactement les portes; ils sauteront immanquablement par la fenêtre.*" In seven months the work was done—the *coup d'état* was struck; and Thiers was the prominent actor both in that public protestation against the legality of the Ordinances, which commenced the Revolution of July, and in those intrigues which completed it by placing the Duke of Orleans on the throne. Since that date he has been the most noted politician of France—sometimes in office—sometimes in opposition—sometimes, as in February 1848, bending to the popular storm, and disappearing under the waves—again, as in May, reappearing on the surface, as active and prominent as ever, as soon as the deluge was beginning to subside. Next to M. Guizot, he is unquestionably the statesman of the greatest genius

and the most practical ability in France; subtle, indefatigable; a brilliant orator, an inveterate intriguer; skilled in all the arts by which men obtain power; restrained by no delicate scruples from using it as his egotism may suggest; alike unprincipled as a minister, and untruthful as an historian; boundless in the aspirations, and far from nice in the instruments, of his ambition; inspiring admiration in every one, but confidence in no one. Still he is one of the few leading men in France who have a clear perception of what that country needs, and can bear; and if his character had been as high as his talents are vast, he might now have been almost omnipotent,

Guizot is a statesman of a different sort, gifted, perhaps, with a less vivid genius, but with a character of more solid excellence and an intellect of a much loftier order. He earned his rank by many years of labour in the paths of history and philosophy before he entered the miry and thorny ways of politics, and both as a diplomatist and minister has shown himself equal to every crisis. Clear, systematic, and undoubting in his opinions, and pertinacious in the promotion of them; stern, cold, and unbending in his manners, with something of the Puritan and much of the Stoic in the formation of his mind, fitted by nature rather for the professor's chair than the turbulent arena of the senate, but "equal to either fortune;" earnestly devoted to the pursuit of truth in philosophic matters, but not always scrupulously adhering to it in the labyrinth of political intrigue; taught by history and

knowledge of contemporaneous life to look upon his countrymen with a degree of mistrust and contempt, which his ministerial career too often showed; watching their follies with more of lofty disdain than of melancholy pity, oftener with a sardonic smile than with a Christian sigh, and meeting the most hostile and stormy opposition with a cold and haughty imperturbability; he was, perhaps, the most suitable, but was certainly the most unpopular ruler that France could have had. The stern front which he constantly opposed to any extension of the popular power or privileges, his resolute hostility to the liberalism of the day, was much blamed at the time, and has since been regarded by some as the proximate cause of the Revolution of February, though scarcely, we think, with justice. We are too well aware of the prodigious and unseen obstacles which public men have to encounter, and of the incalculable difficulty of arriving at a just estimate of their conduct in any peculiar circumstances, which is inevitable to all who are not behind the scenes, to be much disposed to condemn the conduct of M. Guizot, on this head, from 1840 to 1848. It was evidently pursued *on system*, and subsequent events dispose us to think that it may very possibly have been judicious. He seems to have been convinced that the French were not ripe for larger liberties or a wider franchise, and to have resolved to let the education of many years of constitutional monarchy pass over their head before granting them more; and when we remember that the parliamentary

reforms of M. Thiers were as promptly and scornfully thrust aside by the leaders of the February revolution, as the conservative policy of his predecessor, we greatly incline to think M. Guizot may have been right. At all events, he acted on a plan, and from conviction; and if his master had trusted him with sufficient confidence, and had displayed half his nerve, the convulsion which agitated and upset all Europe might, we believe, have been easily compressed within the limits of a Parisian *émeute*. It is worthy of remark that the three governments which succeeded, the Provisional Government, the Dictatorship of Cavaignac, and the National Assembly, have all found, or thought, themselves obliged to be far more sternly repressive than ever M. Guizot was. His two works, published since his fall, on "Democracy in France," and on "The Causes of the Success of the English Revolution," display a profound knowledge of the foibles, the wants, and the perils of his countrymen, such as no other French statesman has shown. If he were again at the head of affairs, the experience of the last two years would, we believe, be found to have rendered the French far more competent to appreciate his merits and more disposed to submit to his rule. A *popular* statesman he can never be.

Lamartine was made to be the idol of the French because he was the embodiment of all their more brilliant and superficial qualities. But he was utterly devoid of statesmanlike capacity. His mind and character were essentially and exclusively poetic; for

power and effect as an orator he was unrivalled; and his "Histoire des Girondins" is one of the most splendid and ornate narratives extant in the world. He had much of the hero about him; he was a man of fine sentiments, of noble impulses, of generous emotions, of a courage worthy of Bayard, and greater perhaps than even Bayard would have shown in civil struggles. In the first three days of the Provisional Government, Lamartine was truly a great man: he was exactly the man demanded by the crisis; he had all the qualities those sixty hours of "fighting with human beasts" required;—and it was not till that long agony was passed, and the government, once fairly seated, was called upon to act, that his profound incapacity and ignorance of political science became apparent. No man spoke more ably or more nobly: no man could have acted more madly, weakly, or irresolutely. He sank at once like a stone. From being the admiration of Europe—the central object on whom all eyes were turned, he fell with unexampled rapidity into disrepute, obscurity, and contempt; and the entire absence of dignity, manliness, and sense betrayed in his subsequent writings has been astounding and appalling. The words in which he sums up the characteristics of the old Girondins are precisely descriptive of himself:—"Ils ne savaient faire que deux choses—bien parler, et bien mourir."

The peculiar administrative institutions of France present another obstacle of the most formidable nature

to the establishment of a stable republican government in that country. There are two distinct and opposite systems of administration, the municipal or self-governing, and the centralising or bureaucratic; and the degree of real freedom enjoyed by any nation will depend more on the circumstance which of these systems it has adopted, than on the form of its government or the name and rank of its ruler. The former system prevails in America, in England, and in Norway; the latter is general upon the Continent, and has reached its extreme point in Germany and France. The two systems as usually understood, are utterly irreconcilable: they proceed upon opposite assumptions; they lead to opposite results. The municipal system proceeds on the belief that men can manage their own individual concerns, and look after their own interests for themselves; and that they can combine for the management of such affairs as require to be carried on in concert. Centralisation proceeds on the belief that men cannot manage their own affairs, but that government must do all for them. The one system narrows the sphere of action of the central power to strictly national and general concerns; the other makes this sphere embrace, embarrass, and assist at the daily life of every individual in the community. Out of the one system a republic naturally springs; or, if the form of national government be not republican in name, it will have the same freedom, and the same advantages as if it were:—out of the other no republic can arise; on it no republic, if

forcibly engrafted, can permanently take root; its basis, its fundamental idea, is despotic.

In no country has the centralising system been carried so far as in France. In no country does it seem so suitable to or so submissively endured by the inhabitants. In no country is the metropolis so omnipotent in fashion, in literature, and in politics. In none is provincialism so marked a term of contempt. In none has the minister at the centre such a stupendous army of functionaries at his beck, appointed by his choice, and removable at his pleasure. The number of civil officers under the control of the central government in France is 535,000; in England it is 23,000. The functions of these individuals penetrate into every man's home and business; they are cognisant of, and license or prohibit his goings out and comings in, his buildings and pullings down, his entering into, or leaving business, and his mode of transacting it. This system, which in England would be felt to be intolerably meddlesome and vexatious, is (it is in vain to disguise it) singularly popular in France;—it is a grand and magnificent fabric to behold; it dates in its completeness from the Consulate, when the nation first began to breathe freely after the revolutionary storms; and amid all the changes and catastrophes which have since ensued, amid governments overthrown and dynasties chased away, no one has made any serious endeavour to alter or even to mitigate this oppressive and paralysing centralisation. It has evidently penetrated into and harmonises with the national character.

The idea of *ruling themselves* is one which has not yet reached the French understanding: the idea of *choosing those who are to rule them* is the only one they have hitherto been able to conceive.

Now, this system, and the habits of mind which it engenders, operate in two ways to add to the difficulties of establishing a firm and compact government. In the first place, it deprives the people of all political education? it shuts them out from the means of obtaining political practice or experience; it forbids that daily association of the citizens with the proceedings of the government, from which only skill and efficient knowledge is to be derived. In England and in America, every citizen is trained in vestries, in boards of guardians, in parochial or public meetings, in political unions, in charitable societies, in magistrates' conclaves, to practise all the arts of government and self-government on a small scale and in an humble sphere; so that when called upon to act in a higher function, and on a wider stage, he is seldom at a loss. This apprenticeship, these normal schools, are wholly wanting to the Frenchman. The establishment of them and practice in them is an essential preliminary to the formation of any republic that can last. The French have been busy in erecting the superstructure, but have never thought of laying the foundation. The following contrast drawn by a citizen of the United States is, in many respects, just and instructive:—

"It has never been denied that political institutions are healthful and durable only according as they have naturally

grown out of the manners and wants of the population among which they exist. Thus, the inhabitants of the United States, inheriting from their English ancestors the habit of taking care of themselves, and needing nothing but to be left to the government of their own magistrates, have gone on prospering and to prosper in the work of their own hands. Every state, county, city, and town in America, you need not be told, has always been accustomed to manage its own concerns without application to or interference from the supreme authority at the capital. And this self-controlling policy is so habitual and ingrained wherever the Anglo-Saxon race has spread, that it will for ever present an insuperable obstacle to the successful usurpation of undue authority by any individual. The people of the thirteen original transatlantic states, in the construction of a commonwealth, had only to build upon a real and solid foundation made to hand; but in France the reverse of this was the case when in the last century a republic was proclaimed, and continues so now, without any material diminution of the rubbish, which must be swept away before a trustworthy basis can be found for the most dangerous experiment in a nation's history. The executive power, securely ensconced in central Paris, like a sleepless fly-catcher in the middle of his well-spun web, feels and responds to every vibration throughout the artfully organised system, which extends from channel to sea, and from river to ocean. Its aim has been to keep the departments in leading-strings, and its success to prevent neighbours from leaning only on each other for neutral aid and comfort in every undertaking great or small, and to drive them to the minister of the interior as the sole dispenser of patronage. Provincialism has hence become naturally associated with social inferiority, sliding easily into vulgarity; and as vulgarity is often carelessly taken for intellectual incapacity, the consequence is, that the many millions living at a distance from the factitious fountain of power are regarded and treated as children, even in matters that most deeply concern their daily comfort. If, for example, a river is to be bridged, a morass drained, or a church erected, more time is lost in negotiating at head-quarters for permission to commence the undertaking than would suffice in England or America to accomplish the same object twice over. Disgusted, doubtless, with all this, and, as too frequently happens, expressly educated by aspiring parents for some official employment,

most provincials of distinguished talents, instead of honourably addressing themselves for advancement, as is the custom in the United States, to their own immediate communities, hasten to the feast of good things, whether within the Elysée or elsewhere, at which they soon learn to take care of themselves, leaving their country, as the motto on their current coin has it, to the 'protection of God.'

"No one ought to feel surprised, then, whenever a revolution happens here, and a republic, the universal panacea which haunts the French brain, is announced, that the people out of Paris, utterly destitute of political training, and without leaders, as they are, should stand agape and helpless as a shipload of passengers in a gale whose ruthless violence has left them without captain or crew. Nor should their helplessness and apparent imbecility be a reproach to their natural intelligence, for the system of centralisation, so briefly alluded to above as a curse to the country, has in its long course benumbed their faculties and paralysed their energies for every sort of action beyond the little circle of a material existence. Neither is this system likely to be soon abandoned, the present minister of the interior having very lately, to my certain knowledge, fiercely and firmly resisted every attempt on the part of the Council of State to modify its operation. In the absence, therefore, of the very groundwork whereon to create and sustain a republic, how can such a form of government endure, except while it is kept, as at present, from toppling over, by the unwilling support of various factions, which preserve it from falling only to prevent an antagonist still more detested from taking its place?"

The second effect of this administrative centralisation is to direct all the active, aspiring, discontented spirit which is always fermenting in the community, upon the originating power in the State. The people are passive as regards the administrators, aggressive as regards the government. They are annoyed or insulted by a policeman or a *sous-préfet*, and they at once, *having no means of direct action upon him, the immediate and subordinate agent*, vent their indignation on the central

power. They have no readier way of avenging themselves on an obnoxious prefect than by upsetting the dynasty which appointed him. When they feel themselves oppressed, unprosperous, or suffering, they go at once to that which the system has taught them to regard as the source of all—the regal palace or the ministerial hotel at Paris: they cashier their rulers, but never dream of changing the system of administration, and consequently never mend their position. The evil remains undiminished; the discontent continues; and all that has been learned is the fatal lesson with what astounding facility governments may be overthrown which have no root in the affections, the habits, the wants, or the character of the people. In England, if a policeman affronts us, we bring him before a magistrate; if an overseer or relieving officer disgusts us, we remember it at the next election of guardians; if a tax-gatherer oversteps his powers, we complain to his chief and insist on his dismissal; if refused a hearing we make parliament itself a party to our grievances; if a magistrate acts oppressively we either expose him, or bring an action against him, secure of impartial justice. But no act of injustice or oppression ever weakens our loyalty to Queen or parliament, for we know they are not responsible for the faults of their subordinates, since they have given us ample means of self-protection against them.

A third reason which renders this central bureaucracy incompatible with any settled and secure

government, except a powerful despotism, deserves much consideration. We have already spoken of the great difficulties thrown in the way of the re-organisation of France, by that passion for material well-being which is at present so salient a feature in the character of her citizens, these difficulties are enormously enhanced when this material wellbeing is demanded *at the hands of the government.* Yet this demand is one which every Frenchman thinks himself entitled to make; and for generations successive governments have countenanced the claim. By taking out of the hands of the individual the regulation of his own destiny, and teaching him to look up to the abstraction called "The State," for guidance, direction, and support, it has sedulously fostered a habit of expecting everything from this supposed omnipotence, and has effectually trodden out that spirit of humble but dignified self-reliance which is the chief source from which material wellbeing can be derived. It has said to its subjects, to quote the words of one who has read deeply the signs of the times, "Ce n'est point à vous, faibles individus, de vous conserver, de vous diriger, de vous sauver vous-mêmes. Il y a tout près de vous un être merveilleux, dont la puissance est sans bornes, la sagesse infaillible, l'opulence inépuisible. Il s'appelle l'état. C'est á lui qu'il faut vous addresser; c'est lui qui est chargé d'avoir de la force et de la prévoyance pour tout le monde; c'est lui qui devinera votre vocation, qui disposera de vos capacités, qui recompensera vos labeurs, qui élevera votre en-

fance, qui recueillera votre vieillesse, qui soignera vos maladies, qui protégera votre famille, qui vous donnera sans mesure travail, bien-être, liberté." * It is not wonderful, then, that the French should have contracted the habit of asking and expecting everything—even impossibilities—from their government; and of urging their claims with the confidence and audacity of "sturdy beggars;"—but picture to yourself a people "passionné pour le bonheur," and trained to look for this *bonheur* at the hands of a government which has taught them to demand it, but has no power to bestow it, and then ask yourself what chance of success or permanence can a republic so situated have?

Republicanism and bureaucracy are incompatible existences. You may call your State a republic if you will—you may modify its form as you please—you may have two chambers or one—you may place at the head a military dictator, or an elective president holding office for one year, for four years, or for ten; but so long as the administration of public affairs remains central and bureaucratic, the utmost that full representation or universal suffrage can give you, is the power of choosing the particular set of busy bodies who shall rule you, or rather the irresponsible individual who shall appoint them. It is not liberty, but merely the selection of your head oppressor. Thus France is in a radically false position, and she has not yet found it out; she is indeavouring uncon-

* Emile Saisset.

sciously to unite two incompatibilities. Her government has all the finished and scientific organisation of a despotism, with the political institutions which belong to freedom. Each man has a share in the choice of his legislator and his executive chief; each man is the depositary of a calculable fraction of the sovereign power; but each man is the slave of the passport office, the prefect, the gendarme, and the policeman. The republic of to-day may wake and find itself an empire to-morrow—scarcely an individnal Frenchman would *feel* the difference—and not one iota of the administration need be changed. As it exists now, it was the child and may be the parent of imperialism. The whole machinery of autocratic rule is at all times ready for the hand of any one who can seize it.

Again: the national traditions of the French as written in their chequered history—the monuments of regal magnificence and splendour, still so cherished and admired, in the Tuileries, at Versailles, and at Fontainebleau—the inextinguishable taste of the people for gorgeous and imposing shows, and their incurable military spirit,—all combine to make the simplicity of a genuine republic unharmonious, grotesque, and out of place among them. It is manifestly an exotic — a transplanted tree of liberty, which nature never intended to grow out of such a soil. The republic, save for a few short years, is associated with no recollections of historic glory: the times which a Frenchman loves to recall are those of Henri Quatre, Louis Quatorze, and Napoleon—none of them names

redolent of liberty. The French are, essentially and above all, a military people. Now, unreasoning obedience to a non-elected and non-deposable chief, an utter abnegation of the individual will, which are the soul of success in war, are direct contradictions to the ideas on which democracies are founded. The passion for external luxury and splendour is incongruous and fatal in a democracy, unless that splendour can be shared by all the people; yet in no civilised nations is that passion stronger than in France, and in few is the contrast so great between the palaces of their monarchs (which they still take pride in and adorn), and the habitations of the other classes of the community. In England, where the democratic element is so powerful and so spreading, there is little difference either in comfort or magnificence between Windsor Castle and Chatsworth, between St James' Palace and the noble mansion of Longleat. The palaces of our sovereigns, the castles of our nobility, the halls of our wealthy and ancient commoners, are connected by imperceptible gradations; our Queen might take up her abode at the houses of some of our country gentlemen, and scarcely discover any diminution in the comfort of her accommodations, or the splendour of her furniture. But in France this is not so. Her royal palaces may rival or eclipse ours —certainly we have nothing so immense or gorgeous as Versailles — but the chateaux and hotels of her nobles belong to an entirely different and much lower class than ours. She has nothing to represent that

class of mansions, which we count by hundreds, of which Devonshire House, Northumberland House, Belvoir Castle, Drayton Manor, Chatsworth, and Longleat, are the type with us. The character of her social hierarchy as depicted in her dwellings is essentially monarchical: ours is essentially aristocratic. Versailles and a republic would be a standing contradiction—a perpetual incongruity and mutual reproach. They represent, and suggest, wholly opposite ideas.

If this article had not already extended to so great a length, we should have dwelt on other difficulties which beset the task of reorganising government and society in France; on those arising from the material condition of her people; from the degree of poverty, incompatible with contentment, in which so large a portion of her population live; from the want of a "career," so painfully felt by many thousands of her most active spirits, and so dangerous to internal peace; from the inadequacy of her protected manufactures, her imperfect agriculture, and her undeveloped commerce, to support in comfort the actual numbers on her soil; from the law of equal inheritance, with all its fatal and unforeseen consequences to peace, to freedom, to wealth, to social interests, and intellectual culture; and last, not least, from the fatal necessity, which each new government that has sprung from a popular insurrection finds itself under, of turning instantly round upon the parties, the ideas, and the principles which have elevated it to power. A government created by a revolution finds that almost its first

task must be to repress revolutionary tendencies; nay more, that it must repress these tendencies far more promptly, more severely, more incessantly, than would be necessary to a government strong in the loyalty of the nation, in the traditions of the past, in the deliberate judgment of the influential classes, and which was not harassed by the spectre of anarchy daily knocking at its gates. Yet such a government —casting down the ladder by which it climbed to office—shutting the door in the faces of undeniable claims—rebuking and punishing the enthusiastic soldiers who had fought for it—imprisoning the friends to whom it owed its existence—fettering and fining the press which had paved the way for its inauguration—has, it cannot be disguised, *primâ facie*, an ugly aspect.

To conclude. The basis of the governments which owed their origin to the first Revolution was reaction against old anomalies; the basis of the Empire was military power; the basis of the Restoration was legitimacy, prejudice, and prestige; the basis of Louis Philippe's government was the material interests of the nation, and the supremacy of the bourgeoisie as the depositaries and guardians of those interests. The Revolution of February—being (as it were) an aggressive negation, not a positive effort, having no clear idea at its root, but being simply the product of discontent and disgust—furnishes no foundation for a government. Loyalty to a legitimate monarch; deference to an ancient aristocracy; faith in a loved and venerated creed; devotion to a military leader; sober

schemes for well-understood material prosperity;—all these may form, and have formed, the foundation of stable and powerful governments: mere reaction, mere denial, mere dissatisfaction, mere vague desires, mere aggression on existing things—never.

To construct a firm and abiding commonwealth out of such materials, and in the face of such obstacles as we have attempted to delineate,—such is the problem the French people are called upon to conduct to a successful issue. Without a positive and earnest creed; without a social hierarchy; without municipal institutions and the political education they bestow; without a spirit of reverence for rights and of obedience to authority, penetrating all ranks,—we greatly doubt whether the very instruments for the creation of a republic are not wanting. A republic does not create these—it supposes and postulates their existence. They are inheritances from the past, not possessions to be called into being by a fiat. They are the slow growth of a settled political and social system, acting with justice founded on authority and tradition, and consolidated by long years of unshaken continuance.

II.

FRANCE IN JANUARY 1852.[1]

WHEN we wrote of France in May 1851—of the difficulty of its task, the instability of its government, and the perplexity of its path—hopeless as we then were of a successful issue, we could scarcely have anticipated that in seven short months that government would be overthrown once more, that task abandoned in despair, that path more dark and intricate than ever. Within three years from the expulsion of the Orleanist dynasty by a knot of fanatical republicans, both victors and vanquished in that sudden struggle have been suppressed by a military despotism; the polity they had joined in constructing has been violently swept away, and France has again become a *tabula rasa* for constitutional experimentalists. We wrote thus in May,—

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[1] From the "North British Review, Feb. 1852."

1. *Œuvres de Louis Napoléon Bonaparte.* Paris. 3 tom. 8vo.
2. *Des Idées Napoléoniennes.* Par L. N. BONAPARTE. Paris.

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Viewed in our imperfect light, and from our field of limited and feeble vision, the sun in his wide circuit shines down upon no sadder spectacle than France now presents to the gazing and astonished world. Rich in material resources, but unable to turn any of them to full account; teeming with brilliant talent and clear intelligence, but doomed to see the talent prostituted and the intelligence abortive; prolific beyond any other country in theories of social regeneration and impossible perfection, yet fated beyond any other to wallow in the mire of the past, and to re-tread the weary cycle of ancestral blunders; unable to reduce into wholesome practice any one of her magnificent conceptions; unable to conduct to a successful issue any one of her promising experiments; ever building houses of cards, which every wind of passion sweeps away; ever

recommencing, never ending; the loftiest and most insatiable of aspirants, the most paltry and laggard of performers; assuming to lead the vanguard of civilisation, but for ever loitering in the rear, for ever acting as the drag. Such is the aspect of France to eyes yet shrouded in the flesh, and darkened by the fears and frailties of humanity. To higher and wiser witnesses,

> "Who watch, like gods, the rolling hours,
> With larger, other, eyes than ours,"

who, gifted with a deeper insight, and purged from our dazzling and misleading sympathies, can see through the present confusion to the future issue—it may be that all these convulsions and vicissitudes are but the struggles of Chaos to form itself into Kosmos, the throes and efforts of a new birth. Each apparent failure may be an essential step in the process of ultimate achievement; each backsliding may be a *reculer pour mieux sauter*; each shattered hope, over whose ruin we have mourned, may have been built upon a false foundation; each seemingly fair and promising construction, which we repine to see destroyed, may have been an obstacle to something sounder and more solid in the distance; and the late apparent annihilation of all that past toil and sacrifice had gained, may be, when viewed aright, an indispensable pre-requisite to greater and more permanent acquisitions—not the ebb of progress—only the receding wave of the advancing tide.

Let us endeavour to arrive at a clear notion of the actual situation of affairs, by a rapid glance at the

defunct constitution, and the conduct of the Assembly and the President respectively.

The destruction of the constitution inaugurated in 1848 has surprised no one; the peculiar mode and time of that destruction has surprised nearly everybody. From the outset it was evident that it was not made to last. The republic itself was a sudden and unwelcome improvisation. It was *imposed* by the violent agents of the revolution, and was never cordially accepted by the intelligence, the property, or the experience of the nation. When the Convention met, the republican form of government was *proclaimed*, not deliberated on nor chosen. The constitution, the work of this Convention, bore upon it the stamp of the circumstances under which, and the body from which, it emanated. It was concocted by a combination of parties who had all of them ulterior aims, and whose ulterior aims were at variance with one another. The Republicans were anxious to make it as purely democratic as possible. The Constitutionalists desired to make the Assembly supreme, both over executive and people. The Imperialists wished to prevent the return of the Bourbon branches. The Orleanists and Legitimists wished reciprocally to destroy each other's hopes. But all parties, dreading lest their rivals should, by caprice or accident, be recalled and entrusted with the executive authority, concurred in reducing that authority to a minimum. The constitution had many faults; this was probably its chief one. It would be unreasonable to demand from a scheme concocted to meet the wants and satisfy

the exigencies of a passing crisis, and with the cannon of the barricades yet ringing in the ears of its fabricators, either the maturity of reflection which characterises the productions of patient reasoning, or the thorough understanding of human passions and requirements, which can only be obtained by long practice in political affairs; or that happy conformity with nations' tastes and manners, which belongs only to institutions which have grown up in the course of ages, and have become firmly rooted in the soil. Few of those who joined in the construction of it regarded it with hope; fewer still with admiration or real satisfaction. To some it was a work of desperation; to others a pilot balloon; to nearly all an expedient to feel their way out of an embarrassing position. Between the various and hostile elements which contended for the mastery in France, the constitution was not a permanent peace, but merely an armistice, a hollow truce. From the first hour that it was promulgated no one had faith in its durability; and perhaps the wisest provision which it contained was the clause which anticipated the probability and prescribed the mode of its revision.

A powerful and long-established government—skilful and unscrupulous, and as resolute in denying the most reasonable demands of the constitutional opposition, as the wildest clamours of the socialists—had been overthrown by a popular outbreak. A period of strange misrule had succeeded, in which the more worthless of the working classes and their leaders reigned almost supreme. The first attempt at return to that state of

order and repression which the very life of society demanded, had been met by the desperate insurrection of the 15th of May, which gave a glimpse of the fearful fate which hung over Paris, and the other great cities of France, if the arm of the executive should be for one moment paralysed or shattered. Scarcely had this been expressed, and the capital been rescued from the "*douze heures de pillage*" which Blanqui had promised to his followers, when the same warning was repeated in still more awful tones. The three days' battle in the streets, which only the concentrated energy of a most resolute dictator was able to determine in favour of the cause of property and law—when Cavaignac was preparing to blow up a whole quarter of the city rather than run the risk of a defeat; when the issue appeared so doubtful, and the case so threatening, that he even meditated withdrawing his army into the country, and concentrating his forces for a prolonged civil war; when the skill and desperation of the insurgents was such, and compelled such terrible severity, that to this hour it is not known how many perished, and some estimate the number at 10,000—this terminated the series of impressive lessons which should have shown the contrivers of the constitution what was needed, and in what direction their fears and precautions ought to lie. But while the ears of every one yet tingled with the frightful denunciations of the defeated insurrectionists; while the heart of every one yet beat at the thought of the horrors they had barely escaped, through the dangerous but indispensable resource of a military dictatorship;

these pedants devoted their entire attention to weakening and hampering the executive power which had just, and with difficulty, saved them :—to a situation and necessities almost unheard of in the world till then, they opposed ideas and plans whose impotence and inadequacy had been fully proved by reiterated failures.

It was clear that what France demanded from the constituent Assembly was the establishment of a supreme power truly and efficiently executive, and a representation really national,—a government sufficiently strong to satisfy the craving *need of being governed,* which all Frenchmen feel by a secret instinct, and have been accustomed to by long generations of a bureaucracy,—and competent to wield with a firm and masterly hand, the stupendous administrative sceptre which the central- and a legislative assembly which should give to the isation organised by Napoleon had bestowed on France; various elements which constitute the real permanent majority, to the summary of all the feelings, opinions, and interests of the nation, an easy, natural, and regular predominance, proportioned to their respective worth and weight. How did it discharge this double task ?

For fifty years France had been covered with the columns and arches of a most majestic administrative edifice, constructed by a master hand, which strikes the imagination by its grandeur, and charms the eye by the uniformity and regularity of its arrangements. The central power, seated in the capital, radiates to the remotest corners of the land, embraces everything in its glance, grasps everything in its hand, exerts everywhere

its mischievous stimulus or its stern control. It asks advice from local bodies, but gives them no power, and permits no interference. Even where it respects private rights, it paralyses personal freedom, and weakens individual responsibility; it keeps everything and everybody under surveillance and in leading strings. A system of direct taxation, strictly levied, gives it an acquaintance with all fortunes; an organised system of state education opens to it an entrance into all families. Nothing, either in the domain of thought or of material interests, escapes its interference; everything looks towards it; everything reposes upon it. From one end of the country to the other, every one of the 37,000 communes into which it is divided, and every one of the 36,000,000 of people who inhabit it, keep their eyes steadily fixed upon the head quarters of the motive power; await their signal from its will; imbibe their inspiration from its breath. The tremendous weapon of authority thus given to the central government, the fearful burden of responsibility thus concentrated upon a single head,—hard to be wielded and oppressive to be borne even by royalty secure of its position, accustomed to command, aided by prestige, and protected by inviolability,—the new constitution placed in the hands of a novice, renewable every four years; chosen by the mass to-day, re-confounded with the crowd to-morrow; chosen by one party, and consequently the antagonist and the destined victim of all other parties; the butt of a thousand intriguers, and driven to counter-intrigues for his defence; superintended with a hostile vigilance by

the most unsatisfiable and imperious of masters; viz., a single, numerous, inexperienced, divided, and factious Assembly, seldom suspending its sittings, and having always a committee of "detective police" to watch him during its short vacations. A dictatorship in the hands of a puppet! Supreme power in the hands of one who is watched and treated as a public enemy! A most subtle, complete, and universal organisation, created by the fiat, and designed for the purposes, of an iron and imperial will, yet confided to the management of a transient, ill-paid officer, bound hand and foot to the caprices of a popular assembly! The President was expected, out of a salary of £25,000 a year, to fill with *éclat* the position of representative chief of a nation fond of splendour, of gaiety, of hospitable show. He was expected to keep the cup of supreme power ever at his lips, but never to do more than taste it. He was to be a great monarch without monarchical permanence, without monarchical veto, without monarchical inviolability. He was carried up to a pinnacle from which he saw all authority, all grandeur, all dominion within his reach, and as it were his appointed inheritance, and then was bidden peremptorily to descend from the giddy eminence, and to turn away his gaze from the alluring prize. Restored for a moment to the imperial throne, and grasping the reins of the imperial chariot, he was expected to still every throb of imperial ambition. Selected by a people accustomed to be much and energetically governed, needing to be so, clamorous to be so, and intrusted therefore with the position of a Cæsar or

a Czar, he was expected to be the submissive slave of a debating club of vestrymen, quarrelling among themselves, and elected by far fewer numbers than himself.

Such was the executive power in France as defined and inaugurated by the new constitution: was the legislative body more wisely organised? It was perhaps scarcely to be expected, that a people just broke loose from all rule, fresh from a triumphant struggle with established authority, fought in the name of the exciting watchwords of liberty, equality, fraternity, should admit any aristocratic element into the new system they were framing; but why should they have deprived themselves of that mighty influence in the scale of order and stability, which, as all history shows, is afforded by a second Chamber? There are many ways of constituting an Upper House without making it either a council of nominees, or a senate of hereditary peers. It might be elected simply by a higher class of electors, or, as in Belgium, require higher qualifications in its members. It might, as in Sardinia, be composed of men selected from among literary, judicial, scientific, and military notabilities. It might be chosen by different districts, and for different terms, from those of the Lower House, as in the state of New York, or might be obtained by a double election, as in the federal Union of America. There are so many modes in which an effective and valuable second Chamber might be obtained, that the French had no excuse for rejecting it on the ground of difficulty. But the Assembly being resolved to retain the supreme power in its own hands, was unwilling to

be in any way checked or fettered, or compelled to an unwelcome degree of deliberation. It therefore cast away, almost without the compliment of a discussion, the suggestion of a second Chamber, with all the obvious advantages that might have flowed from such an arrangement, and substituted a most clumsy and incautious scheme for preventing hasty or inconsiderate changes in one direction only,—by enacting that, however faulty their new constitution might prove, it should be in the power of a small minority to prohibit its amendment. They required a majority of *three-fourths* to legalise a revision. They tied their own hands in the one case, in which, as it happened, it was peculiarly desirable to leave them free. Everything else was stamped in moveable types: the hasty and unmanageable constitution was alone stereotyped.—It was, perhaps, scarcely to be expected that, in a constitution springing from a revolution which, if not made by the masses, was at least promptly seized upon by them, any other system than that of universal suffrage should have been adopted. But three things these lawmakers might have done which they did not: they might at least have left the discussion of the matter free; they might have respected the principle, once adopted, when it pronounced against them, as well as when it spoke in their favour; and they might have surrounded its exercise with all the wise precautions and judicious arrangements which could mitigate its dangers, and render it the *bonâ fide* expression of the nation's will. Instead of this, the Convention hastily

passed a law early in 1848, placing the principle of universal suffrage under the protection of the tribunals —making it penal to question or discuss it—treating the exposure of its evils and its dangers as sedition and treason. In the next place, as if conscious that their successors would desire to undo their clumsy workmanship, they violated the principle they had laid down, setting universal suffrage, or the government of the majority, at defiance, by enacting that, where the constitution was in question, the many should bow to the decision of the few. Consider for a moment the full extent of this grotesque and insolent absurdity. Every republic, and the republic of 1848 more nakedly than any other, is based upon the will of the majority. It is their sole recognised foundation. An absolute monarchy rests upon the divine right of kings. An hereditary aristocracy rests upon the superior claims and powers of special families. A theocracy rests upon direct religious sanction. But republics sweep all these away. The republic of 1848 ignored and denied them all. Hereditary right, constitutional legality, established institutions, equilibrium of power,—it sacrificed all to the blind worship of THE MAJORITY. No sooner, however, had it done so, than it turned round upon the nation, and said: "The majority is omnipotent, and its authority unquestionable, only to authorise us and to sanction our decrees: we pronounce it powerless to negative or change them. So long as a minority of one-fourth supports our constitution, so long that constitution shall be inviolable." The majority of the

nation, by the voice of the majority of its representatives legally elected, demands a change in the form of the government. The minority steps in and says, "No! there shall be no such change—neither to-day, nor to-morrow, nor ten years hence, so long as one-fourth of the people or their deputies object to it. We, the few, will control and govern you, the many." And the men who held this language, and considered this proceeding just, are the republicans *par excellence!* The democrats are the oligarchs. The very men who thus contended for the permanent right of the few to bind the many, were the very men who sprung out of the victory of the many over the few,—whose position, whose very existence, was the creation of the principle they thus repudiated! The constitution which declared itself inviolable and unchangeable, even by a large majority, was the very constitution which was found to be so intolerable that a large majority insisted upon its alteration. Were they to retain and obey a bad law, because that law itself forbad them to repeal it? Whence could anybody derive a right to make such an enactment? With what decency or justice could a constituent assembly, itself the offspring of the victory of the majority over the minority, enact that in future the minority should bind the majority?

If the principle of universal suffrage was thus slightly respected, even by those who asserted it most loudly, the arrangements for carrying it into practical operation were marked by no extraordinary sagacity. Out of the seven or eight million of voters who found

themselves endowed with the franchise, a very large proportion consisted of the peasantry of the rural districts, little cognisant of political affairs, and little interested in party strife. Numbers of them would have no idea how to vote: numbers of them would not care how they voted: numbers more would not wish to vote at all. The rock on which universal suffrage is almost always wrecked is, the ignorance or the indifference of the great mass of the electors. Thousands of the peasantry never stir from home: hundreds of thousands know no one beyond the limits of their own commune, and never hear the names of obscure or intriguing political aspirants. If, therefore, it were desired most effectually to confirm their indifference to the elections, and to embarrass them in their choice of a candidate, and utterly to confuse their comprehension of the whole transaction, no better scheme could have been devised than to make them vote by *departments* instead of by *arrondissements* or by *communes*,—and to call upon them to elect at once, not one man whom they may chance to know, but a whole list of ten, fifteen, or twenty, the names of nearly all of whom they probably never heard of, and of whose respective qualifications they cannot form the most remote conception. A plan like this was sure to throw the virtual choice into the hands of clubs, or knots of political agitators, who would *exploiter* the great body of the electors for their own purposes and interests; and was likely to end in the great mass of the people retiring from the

exercise of the suffrage in carelessness or disgust. One of the chief evils, indeed, of universal suffrage is, that it never does, and rarely can, give the actual sentiments and wishes of the numerical mass of the population. Those interested in political strife vote; those who are sick of it, or indifferent to it, abstain from voting. Among the working classes this is particularly the case. There is the peaceful industrious artisan, loving work much, independence more, and his family most of all, living aloof from the turmoil and passions of the public world, and whose leisure is spent by the domestic hearth, and in the society of his wife and children. And there is the artisan who considers himself enlightened, who frequents *cafés*, who reads newspapers, who heads processions, who mans barricades, to whom haranguing is far pleasanter than honest labour. To the first, a day lost at elections is a nuisance and an injury, a supper or a breakfast wanting, diminished wages, an unfinished job, scantier food or clothing for his children or himself. To the second it is a joyful holiday, a noisy spree, a positive indulgence, possibly an actual gain of more than he would have earned in a week by steady industry. The result is, that the first man, whose vote would be of real value and meaning to the community, never gives it: the second, whose vote is worthless and a deception, records it on every occasion; and the nation is as far as ever from having gathered the real feelings and opinions of its citizens. In times of excitement and of novelty, such as the first general

election, or the choice of a president, this evil is not so much felt; but so strongly was it beginning to be feared, that one of the last proposals laid before the late Assembly, was for making it penal to abstain from the exercise of the franchise,—for inflicting a fine on all who neglected to record their votes.[1]

Such being the constitution imposed upon France, but never submitted to the country for ratification, what has been the conduct of the Assembly elected under its auspices? Its whole career has been one series of intrigues against the President, of squabbles among its members, of assaults upon the liberties of the nation, of violations of its trust, and of decisions which gave the lie to its origin and its professions; and it has done more to sicken France with the very name and principle of representative government than any elected body since the days of the National Convention. It was elected under a republic; it was appointed to consolidate and perfect the republic; it commenced life by swearing allegiance and fidelity to the republic;—yet it was composed in great part of Orleanists, Bonapartists, and Legitimists, who made no secret either of their actual views or of their ulterior designs. Probably not more than 250 members were at any time genuine republicans at heart. The Orleanists visited Claremont, and intrigued for the return of the exiled House. The Legitimists avowedly received their directions from

[1] For this sketch of the vices of the constitution we are greatly indebted to two *brochures* by M. Albert de Broglie.

Wiesbaden, and kept steadily before them the interests of the Count de Chambord. The Bonapartists openly sighed after the imperial *régime*, and took their orders from the Elysée. The members of the Mountain alone were faithful to their trust; they stood to their colours, though conscious that the country was against them, and combined with each of their antagonists in turn to defeat and embarrass the others. A sadder, more factious, more disreputable spectacle than that Assembly, a free country has seldom seen, They turned round almost immediately upon the constituents who had elected them. They abolished universal suffrage by 466 votes to 223, and disfranchised three millions of electors. They sent an army to crush the republic of Rome, then fighting so gallantly for its existence, by 469 votes to 180. They handed over the primary instruction of the nation to the clergy by 445 votes to 187. They enacted laws and sanctioned proceedings against the liberty of the press, severer than Louis Philippe had ever ventured upon. By compelling every writer to sign his name to each article in the journals, they struck a fatal blow at both the influence and the independence of journalism. They sat nearly in permanence, and kept the nation in perpetual hot water. Whenever they adjourned for a short holiday, they left a committee of watch-dogs to overhaul every act of the executive. Their questors attempted to gain the command of the army. And, finally, at the moment of their dissolution, they were discussing, and were expected by a factious combination, to pass a law

(" on the responsibility of the executive ") which would have virtually transferred the whole power of the state into their hands.

While the Assembly were thus conspiring against, violating, and discrediting the constitution to which they owed their existence, and which they had sworn to maintain, the conduct of the President had scarcely been one whit more patriotic or more honest. From the first day of his inauguration, it was evident that he was determined to be re-elected—by a revision of the constitution, if that could be obtained; if not, in defiance of the constitution. It is even probable that he aimed, not only at a prolongation, but at an increase of his power. For this he flattered the army; for this he removed and appointed generals and prefects; for this he played into the hands of the priests; for this he joined the conservative majority in enacting the law of the 31st of May; for this he joined the republicans in demanding its repeal. Every action betrayed his patient plodding, and unscrupulous ambition. But on the other hand, he had shown always such sagacity and often such dignity; his language and bearing were moulded with such unerring tact to suit the tastes and fancies of the French people; and his personal objects, as far as they were seen, were felt to harmonise so much with the apparent interests of the country, that a strong feeling had grown up among nearly all classes in his favour. His popularity rose as that of the Assembly declined. While reputation after reputation among public men had sunk or suffered shipwreck,—while

every other statesman had gone down in general estimation,—while Cavaignac had lost much of his prestige, and Lamartine had been utterly extinguished, and Thiers had been discredited, baffled, and unmasked, and even Guizot had failed to make any progress towards the redemption of his fame,—the character of Louis Napoleon gradually rose, from the first day of his election; every step, whether his own or his opponents', contributed to confirm his popularity and consolidate his power. He suffered his rivals and antagonists to exhaust and expose themselves by their own violence; and, keeping strictly within the limits of his prerogative he "bided his time," and came out victorious from every struggle. Previous, therefore, to the *coup d'état* there had gradually grown up among nearly all classes of Frenchmen, a conviction that the destinies of the nation would be far safer, and its character far higher, if confided to a man who, whatever were his faults, had at least shown that he possessed a definite purpose and a firm will,—than if left in the hands of a body of men who had manifested no signs of a lofty and decorous patriotism, who had regarded all questions of public policy, foreign and domestic, only as they could be turned to their own private or factious advantage, and who had permitted the sacred banner of the commonwealth, intrusted to their keeping, to be torn by the animosities, and soiled by the passions of party.

Indeed, it is not easy to exaggerate the discredit brought upon themselves, and upon the very theory of representative government, by the proceedings of the

leaders of the various political parties in France. Chosen by a suffrage almost universal, bound to their constituents by the closest ties, and returning to them after only three years' tenure of office, it might have been anticipated that, if only from selfish considerations, they would have steadily devoted themselves to study the real and permanent interests of the country, and would have co-operated heartily and zealously with the executive in devising and carrying out schemes for rendering France peaceful and prosperous at home, and powerful and respected abroad. It might have been hoped that their labour would have been earnestly directed towards developing the vast resources of the country, and securing to its industry the freest and most favourable action; that everything calculated to raise and improve the condition of the masses would have had their first and most sedulous attention; and that, above all things, they would have striven hard and have sacrificed much for the maintenance of that silent internal harmony, which is the primary necessity of a nation's life. It might have been expected that they would have regarded every question of foreign policy, first, in its bearings on the special interests of France, and secondly, in its bearings on the progress elsewhere of that freedom which they had just re-conquered, and of which everywhere they were the professed defenders. Instead of this, party politics, not social philosophy, occupied almost their whole time; and external action was dictated by a desire to gain the support of this or that section, to destroy this rival,

or discredit that antagonist; till their entire career became one indecent and disreputable scramble.

The result inevitably was an increasing feeling on the part of the public, first of indignation, then of disgust, latterly of sickened and most ominous indifference. Ominous, that is, for popular leaders and representative assemblies;—for the people—weary of watching the objectless and petty squabbles of their chosen legislators, and disheartened by finding that the rulers they selected for themselves treated them no better and served them no more effectively, than the rulers who had been imposed upon them—began to turn their attention to their own private affairs, and to discover how much more they could do for themselves than governments and assemblies could do for them. Since they had trusted more to themselves and less to parliaments, they had prospered comparatively well. Trade was spirited, and industry was thriving and increasing. The political storms which used to agitate all ranks began to pass nearly unheeded over their heads; for they perceived how paltry and inconsequential they were. They put their own shoulders to the wheel, instead of calling on the gods above to help them; and all the noisy quarrels of the great Olympus fell, as by magic, into their genuine insignificance. An idea had already dawned upon the French, that an Assembly which had done so little for them was not of much importance to them; and that if they could prosper in spite of its scandalous dereliction of its duties, and its selfish abuse of its powers, they might

perhaps prosper even were it non-existent. A wholesome lesson, possibly, for the people, but a fatal one for demagogues and orators.

When a people has thus begun to look after their private affairs instead of discussing affairs of State, and to act for themselves instead of calling on their rulers to act for them, only one thing is needed to insure their welfare—viz., that the government should bring them and secure them tranquillity and order. If it will do this, they ask no more: if it does not do this, it abnegates its paramount and especial function; it becomes to them a nuisance, not a protection—"a mockery, a delusion, and a snare." Now, few Englishmen are aware, though it is no novel information to a Parisian, to what an extent Frenchmen had come to look upon the Assembly in this light. The constant series of moves and stratagems of which the history of that body was made up, kept the nation in a perpetual state of excitement, expectation, and turmoil. They never knew what would come next. They were constantly on the *qui vive* for some new explosion. So long as the Assembly was sitting, there was incessant agitation and wild unrest; and thousands would thankfully have paid the members their twenty-five francs a day not to sit at all. Peace—comparative peace—came with prorogation; but the sessions were felt to be deplorably too long, and the vacations piteously too few. So that the body which ought to have been the shield and safeguard of the nation, the guardian of its interests, the protector of its rights, had come to be

regarded as a plague, a mischief, and an enemy. Only when it ceased to sit, did France begin to breathe freely.

The plain truth is that no nation—not even the French—can bear to be for ever in hot water. Ceaseless political agitation is an element in which neither material prosperity, nor moral wellbeing can live. If it seemed hopeless to find the needed tranquillity in freedom, and republicanism, who can wonder if many lost faith and heart, and began to cast a sigh after the calm despotism which beckoned to them out of the softening haze of the past, or towards that which loomed gradually out of the uncertain future. France, for many months back, had echoed in her heart of hearts the words of that touching inscription on the Italian tombstone — *implora pace.* Wearied with achievements which had led to nothing, and victories which had been crowned by no enduring conquests, and trophies dearly purchased, but barren of the promised consequences — her whole desires were fast merging into the one succinct petition of the grand old warrior of Carthage, who—harassed by perpetual warfare, broken by family afflictions, and thwarted by an ungrateful State—closed a public life of singular glory and of bitter disenchantment, with the simple prayer, comprised in so few words, yet full of such melancholy pathos:—"*Ego, Hannibal, peto pacem!*"

Such was the state of feeling in France, and such the relative position of the contending parties, immediately previous to the *coup d'état,*—and it is

important thoroughly to fix this in our minds, in order to comprehend the full meaning of the President's attempt, and the explanation of the manner in which it was received by the nation. On the one side stood Louis Napoleon, who had far surpassed all expectations formed of him from his discreditable antecedents, and had risen higher day by day in public estimation —who had shown consummate knowledge of the temper of the people, and supreme tact in dealing with it—who had finally taken his stand on the broad basis of universal suffrage—who had long foreseen and been preparing for the inevitable struggle—and with strange sagacity and patience had, as the phrase is, given his opponents "rope enough to hang themselves." On the other side stood the Assembly, on the eve of an election, yet seemingly intent on showing how unfit they were to be re-chosen,—pointing, as their sole titles to popular confidence and a renewal of their trust, to millions of constituents disfranchised—to the revision of a clumsy constitution, demanded by the people but refused by themselves—to the freedom of the press, through their means, trampled under foot—to France, through their intrigues, rendered light as a feather in the balance of European power—to her gallant army, through their connivance, engaged in the degrading employment of restoring a miserable pontiff, and enslaving an emancipated people—to a secret trust, perverted to the purposes of low ambition —to the very name of a representative assembly, through their misconduct, covered with ridicule and shame.

What the President did we need not relate here; how he dissolved the Assembly, abolished the constitution, imprisoned députies and generals, appealed to the people, and extinguished all resistance with unsparing severity,—all this is known to every one. The degree of his criminality in this daring usurpation will be differently estimated by different men according to the view they may take as to the wishes and interests of France, the urgency of the crisis, and the reality of the alleged and indicated intention on the part of the Assembly to have forestalled and deposed him. On the one hand, it is unquestionable that if he had waited till the Assembly had passed the bill (on executive responsibility), which they were then considering, he would have been wholly in their power. If he had allowed matters to go on as they were till the election of May, a popular outbreak and a deplorable convulsion would have been almost inevitable; for matters had been so arranged that both the legislative and presidential elections would take place at nearly the same time, under a disputed electoral law, and when all the powers of the State were in a condition of paralysis and dissolution. The greatest contest ever known in a representative system was to take place round the dying bed of an expiring President and an expiring Assembly; and the president sure to be chosen was a president ineligible by law.—Moreover, Louis Napoleon might plead that *he*, as well as the Assembly, was elected by universal suffrage; that the Assembly had ceased to

be in harmony with their constitutents, while he had not; that when two co-ordinate powers, equally chosen by the people, disagree, the only mode of deciding the dispute is by an appeal to the authority from which both emanate; and that all he did was to make that appeal *arbitrarily*, which the constitution denied him the power of doing legally. On the other hand, it is equally undeniable that the act which he has perpetrated bears, on the face of it, all the features of a great crime. The constitution which he has violently suppressed, bad as it was, was the deliberately framed constitution of his country, and was the one which, knowing all its faults, he had sworn to maintain and obey. The liberties which he had so ruthlessly trampled under foot, were the liberties which he had sworn to respect and to watch over. The blood which he has shed was the blood of his fellow-citizens, and ought to have been precious in his eyes. The oath which he has broken was an oath solemnly tendered and often voluntarily affirmed. Therefore, if he is to be forgiven, he must sue out his pardon from the future. Nothing can palliate his crime, except its being the last. Nothing can excuse his seizure of power, except the patriotic use he makes of it. In the meantime we are not anxious to hold the balance or to cast the lot between the guilty President and the guilty Assembly. We adopt the words of Victor Cousin on a different occasion,—"Je renvoie, donc, les extravagances aux extravagans, les crimes aux criminelles, et je détourne les yeux de ce

sang et de cette boue,"—and, from the sickening and idle task of awarding the palm between two culpable combatants, we turn to consider the prospects, the feelings, and the fate of FRANCE under the new *régime*. Power, illegally seized, is sometimes legally sanctioned. The crimes of individual ambition are often overruled by Providence so as to work out the welfare of nations.

In the first place, Louis Napoleon's usurpation has been since ratified and sanctioned in a manner which, after every reasonable deduction has been made on account of the circumstances of the polling, leaves no ground whatever for doubting that it was approved by the nation. Whatever some of our English journals, in their anger and amazement, may say as to the probability of the returns having been falsified, no man in France believes that anything of the kind has been done, to any important extent at least. The total adult male population of France is, as near as can be ascertained, nine millions, and of these we can scarcely reckon fewer to be disqualified from various causes than half a million. This would leave 8,500,000 as the total number of electors under universal suffrage. Of these in round numbers 7,500,000 have voted for Louis Napoleon, and 700,000 against him, while 300,000 have abstained from voting. There can be no doubt that some voted in ignorance of the facts of the case; some in an overweening fear of the socialists; some because, though no friends to Louis Napoleon, they saw no alternative between him and anarchy. It is impossible to affirm, that an election which has

taken place while all newspapers were suppressed or garbled, while all public meetings and other facilities for forming and circulating opinion were proscribed, while the principal political chiefs were in durance, and while many departments were under martial law, can be considered as a fair one. We believe that Louis Napoleon has done himself serious injury and injustice by thus enabling his antagonists to assert, without the possibility of disproof, that votes have been tampered with, coerced, or obtained by fraud. But when every allowance has been made, we do not believe, and we think no man in France really believes, that the late poll does not give the fair and genuine result of the sentiments of the vast numerical majority of the nation. As to the feelings of the middle classes, we are left to gather the truth from a variety of indications. The great and continued rise in the French *rentes*, which, notwithstanding the foolish insinuations of some ignorant journalists, was perfectly *bonâ fide;* the equivalent advance in the price of railway shares; the increased price of most kinds of goods; the immediate and marked revival in nearly all branches of trade; the issuing of orders which had been long suspended; —all concur to intimate the warm approval of the *coup d'état* by the industrial, commercial, and financial classes of France. All our own private foreign correspondents, whether enemies or friends of the President, confirm this conclusion. All agree in representing the state of anxiety and uncertainty in which they had long been kept as utterly intolerable;

most express confidence in the wisdom of Louis Napoleon's future rule and its suitability to France; all speak of the satisfaction felt at the revolution being nearly universal among all who have anything to lose or anything to gain by honest and reputable means. The majority of the press we presume to be hostile, as also most of the politicians of France. The opinion of the Legitimists and that of the Orleanists appears to be divided. On the whole, however, it cannot be denied that France has elected Louis Napoleon with hearty good will, and anticipates much from his government.

In considering this matter, it is important that we should divest ourselves of our insular prejudices and habits of thought, and inquire not what we should feel under such circumstances, but what Frenchmen would be likely to feel; not what *régime* would be suitable for England, but what *régime* is best adapted for France. We must bear in mind that our notions of freedom and policy are utterly at variance with theirs —that our *beau idéal* of a perfect government is diametrically opposite to theirs. The French notion of liberty is political equality; the English notion is personal independence. The French are accustomed to have their government do everything for them, and direct them in everything, and they expect and wish it to do so; the English wish never to feel the action, or be compelled to recognise the existence, of government in their daily and private life. It would therefore be both pedantic and misleading to judge the one nation by the standard of the other, or to act

for the one on the system of the other. There are two kinds of freedom—two modes in which a nation may exercise and prove its liberty. We have chosen one; France has always shown a marked preference for the other. We prefer to govern ourselves; it is the peculiar taste of the Anglo-Saxon. The French prefer to choose their governor, and then leave everything in his hands: it is the fancy of the Celt. If we select the more troublesome mode, of directing and ruling ourselves, and displaying our liberty in every action of our daily life, we are scarcely at liberty to despise our neighbour as a slave, because he prefers the easier, lazier, and more dangerous plan of concentrating all *his* liberty into a single deed, and then abnegating self-management and self-responsibility for ever. Ours, indeed, is unquestionably the wiser and the safer plan; but it may not be suited for, or practicable among, a race so divergent from ourselves as are the people of France.

May not the French have been all along *upon the wrong tack,* in aiming at the establishment of a parliamentary government in their country? May they not have been entirely mistaken in adopting and supposing that they could manage a machine which appeared to have done so well with us? May not the form of government and the guarantees of freedom suitable for France be wholly different from those which have been found available in England?

An ancient legend of deep significance relates that there once lived a magician who had discovered a

spell of singular cogency and virtue, by means of which he could command the attendance and compel the obedience of a familiar spirit, through whose services he acquired fame, wealth, and wide dominion. A favourite pupil, inspired with the ambition of rivalling his master's power, possessed himself of the mighty secret, pronounced the magic spell, and evoked the wondrous agency; but he had emitted one little and apparently unimportant word in the formula of invocation, and the demon, therefore, though he had obeyed the summons, refused to submit to the control of the incompetent magician; instead of being a serviceable and obedient slave, he became an imperious and terrific tyrant, whom the unfortunate evoker was unable to dismiss, who tormented him through life, and ended by tearing him to pieces.

The events that for the last sixty years have been passing on the other side of the Channel, seem the reproduction of this medieval tale. France is the ambitious pupil; representative institutions the magical spirit—the power for good or evil—which she has evoked, but cannot manage or dismiss. In summoning them to her aid to enable her to rise out of the servitude and degradation of the past, and enter on a new career of greatness and glory, she forgot one little ingredient in the composition of the magic spell, the omission of which has converted a blessing into a bane, a patient servant into a capricious despot, and has transmuted the pride and safeguard of England into the curse and reproach of France. Personal virtue,

public principle, pure, lofty, and self-abnegating patriotism was omitted from the invocation. The formula was borrowed faithfully enough; the spirit which sanctified and gave it efficacy was alone left out.

From its first glorious beginning in 1789, to its last ignominious ending in 1851, the whole history of Representative Assemblies in France has been one series of oscillations between despotism and impotence. When there has been only one Chamber it has almost invariably grasped at the supreme authority; when there have been two they have been as uniformly curbed or rendered insignificant. Parliaments in France have always either absorbed the executive power or been absorbed by it. They have alternately been omnipotent or powerless. They have always been either sinned against, or sinning. Never yet have the legislative and the executive bodies worked in harmony as co-equal and co-ordinate functionaries. Neither has endured "a brother near the throne." Neither seems to have been able to conceive any medium between absolute authority or complete subserviency, nor to have believed its existence safe or dignified till its rival and colleague was effaced or enslaved. The reins of power have dangled between the two, snatched alternately by the one or the other,—the unhappy chariot of the State, in the meantime, dragged first into one ditch, then into the other, but always going to the dogs.

When the first great revolution broke out, sixty-two years ago, nearly all parties seemed disposed to put aside the past as an ugly dream,—the present looked

very hopeful, and the future very bright. A monarchy strong in old associations, an Assembly rich in young hopes and enthusiastic aspirations, a fine spirit of patriotism and energy pervading most classes of the nation, seemed materials to warrant the most sanguine anticipations. But the struggle for supremacy soon began, the sovereign intrigued against the Chamber; the Chamber encroached upon the sovereign, thwarted him, fettered him, reduced him to a cypher, imprisoned him, and slew him. The Assembly possessed itself of the executive power, and governed the country by sections and committees: *how*, let the Reign of Terror, and the reaction, incapacity, and license of the Directory, proclaim. When Napoleon, on the 18th Brumaire, overpowered the Chambers by an armed force, and became First Consul, then Consul for life, then Emperor, the Representative Assemblies sank into a nullity, and throughout his reign remained little but courts for registering and giving legal form and validity to his decrees. Under Louis XVIII. and Charles X., they were little heeded by the monarch, and little respected by the people; they spoke sometimes, but scarcely ever acted, and such spirit of liberty as survived in France was kept in existence by a resolute but persecuted press. Then came the revolution of 1830, when "the charter was henceforth to be a truth," a real fact; but corruption soon again made the Chambers what oppression had made them before, the passive tools of the monarch's will. An Assembly chosen by 180,000 electors, among

whom the sovereign had 600,000 places to dispose of, could be no valid barrier to his authority; and Louis Philippe became nearly absolute under the forms of constitutionalism. Lastly followed the revolution of February, which installed in office a single popular and powerful Chamber, with an elective President high in station, dignity, and nominal authority, but watched, thwarted, and guarded as a public enemy. The old contest immediately recommenced; the President resented and fretted under his position of invidious and jealous slavery; the Assembly intrigued to engross the entire authority of the State; and the old miserable struggle was terminated by the old rusty weapon—a *coup d'état*, and a military despotism.

Now, why is it that constitutional government, which works so well in England, will not work at all in France? Why is it that, however often it is re-established there, the irresistible tendency of the nation towards another state of things ensures its speedy overthrow, or its virtual dormancy? Why is it that the representative system, every time it is set up in France, seems, by its failure, to proclaim its want of adaptation to the national necessities, its want of harmony with the national characteristics? Does not this reiterated rejection of it, like food which does not agree, indicate that *it is not what France requires*, that it is not the medicine or the aliment which nature prescribes for her present constitution, or her actual maladies? Let us consider, especially, two points which will illustrate our meaning.

The representative system is essentially the creature and the child of *compromise.* Constitutional government, by which we mean an elective body emanating from the people, co-existing as a reality by the side of an executive, whether hereditary or not, endowed with the requisite authority,—is the result of mutual forbearance, moderation, and respect; exists only by virtue of these qualities; could not endure for an hour without them. It is an entire mistake to imagine such a scheme *theoretically good;* it is, on the contrary, *theoretically imperfect,* and is feasible only on the supposition of additional elements, which are not "nominated in the bond." It is an entire mistake to affirm that English liberty has flourished in consequence of our glorious constitution. English liberty has flourished in spite of our anomalous and defective constitution; it has flourished in consequence of national virtues, in the absence of which that constitution would have been utterly unmanageable. The machine which is supposed to have made us what we are, would have broken down generations ago, had we been other than what we are. It is full of checks and counter-checks, of anomalies and incongruities, which would seem to indicate its fitting place, as an unworking model, in a museum of monstrosities. The monarch has the sole power of forming treaties, and of declaring peace and war. He alone commands the army. He alone appoints all functionaries, civil, military, and judicial. He can dissolve parliament whenever it thwarts him, and as often as he pleases. He

can put an absolue veto on all its enactments. He can suspend laws by orders in council, if he can find ministers bold enough to run the risk of a refusal on the part of parliament to indemnify them afterwards. The House of Lords, or a majority of them, about 200 men, can snub both king and House of Commons, and stop all proceedings indefinitely, and paralyse the entire action of Government. Again, the House of Commons can release the army from their allegiance, by omitting to pass the yearly "Mutiny Bill." It can refuse the monarch the means of carrying on the war which it yet empowers him to declare, and of paying the functionaries whom it yet authorises him to appoint. It can impeach the ministers whom it allows him to nominate; yet if they are condemned, it still leaves him the power of conferring immunity upon them by an unlimited prerogative of pardon. The constitution gives the monarch means of absolute despotism, *if* he is wicked enough to desire it, and *if* the army will stand by him, and *if* the people will endure military rule. It gives the nobles power to set both people and monarch at defiance, if they are selfish and daring enough to do so. It gives the Lower House the power of starving both its colleagues into a surrender, on the supposition that both its colleagues will keep within the limits of the law. But it proceeds throughout on the supposition that none of these things will occur; *that their occurrence will be prevented by their possibility;* that none of the three parties will be forgetful of their duties, or be disposed

to push their rights to an extreme; that each will bear and forbear; that all will join in masking the impossibilities of the constitution, and avoiding the collisions which its theory makes so easy; and that all, like the reverential children of the frail patriarch of old, will concur in covering, with a decent and respectful drapery, the nakedness of their common parent.

But what would be the result were the English machine to be worked by French hands? Each of the three co-ordinate authorities would assert its power to the utmost. Each would make use of its large portion to seize the whole. The peers would put on the drag at the slightest opposition to their will. The Commons would stop the supplies on the most trivial provocation. The sovereign would employ the army to levy the taxes and subdue the people. The parliament would impeach the minister, and the monarch would insult and defy them by giving him a free pardon. The whole would be at a dead-lock in a month. The opposing forces would substitute mutual antagonism for mutual control; and the result would be, not a *diagonal* as with us, but simply a checkmate —not a medial movement, but an absolute stoppage. The *ultima ratio* which we have staved off for centuries, would be reached by Frenchmen in a single session. Representative government, then, we say, embodies the essence, breathes the atmosphere, lives the life of COMPROMISE. But the French hate compromise. The very idea of it disgusts them. What

they are they like to be completely. What they have they like to have to themselves, without colleague or without competitor. A possession which they hold only in concert, with equal co-proprietors, has few charms for them. The Legitimists are unwilling to replace their sovereign on the throne, on any basis but that of divine right, and absolute authority. In their notion he would be degraded if he owed his crown to the summons of the people, or shared his power with a new aristocracy, or a popular assembly. The *bourgeoisie* in like manner would ignore the nobles, and reduce them to a nullity. And the democracy, equally exclusive and intolerant, cannot imagine that the mass of the people can be rightfully called on to admit the existence or recognise the claims of any other party, and insist upon an exclusive, absolute, and uncontrolled dominion. Guizot, in his Treatise on Democracy, seized this peculiarity of France with the quick instinct of a master's eye. "Peace is impossible," he says (for the word *peace* we would substitute *representative constitutionalism*), "so long as the various classes and political parties whom our society comprises, nourish the hope of mutually destroying each other, and possessing an exclusive empire. This is the evil which, since 1789, torments us continually, and overthrows us periodically. The monarchic, aristocratic, and democratic elements, have not accepted or recognised each other, but have toiled for their reciprocal exclusion. Constitution, laws, administration, have been in turn directed, like

engines of war, to the destruction of one or other party. It has been a 'war to the knife,' in which neither of the combatants believed it possible to live if his rival was still erect and breathing by his side."

French exclusiveness and the hatred of compromise, then, is the first reason why representative institutions have not flourished in France. But there is another and a yet deeper cause. The revolutions have always begun at the wrong end. They have looked only to one point, and that not the primary, nor the most essential one. They have begun their reforms with institutions, not with individuals. They have thought it sufficient to reconstruct society in the aggregate, without modifying or amending the units which compose it. They forgot in their earliest efforts, and have never paused to remember since, that the concrete mass must represent and resemble the materials of which it is made up; and that if the individuals are corrupt, selfish, violent, and impure, the community cannot be firm, peaceable, dignified, or noble. Accustomed to trace their evils to their institutions, taught alike by their writers and their orators to cast upon empty forms the burden of their engrained sins, they conceived that a change of institutions and of forms would work those miracles, which are the slow and painful product of private virtue and individual exertion; of patient toil, and more patient endurance —of mutual respect, and mutual love. They imagined they could reform society without first reforming themselves. Hence all their schemes and

constitutions have been projects for obtaining the reward without the effort—the victory without the conflict or the sacrifice; for dispensing with indispensable qualifications in place of eliciting or exercising them; for doing great actions without first training great souls; for seeking in the barren and narrow range of the mechanical, what can only be found in the rich resources of the moral world. They worked for the salvation of the individual without requiring his participation in the task. Fatal blunder! They imagined that men might be rendered free and equal by destroying external barriers and striking off material chains; they did not perceive that freedom and equality have their sole roots and guarantees within the *man*. They abolished the *ancien régime;* but they abolished it in vain, while each man carried his *ancien régime* within himself. The old vices, the old corruption, the old selfishness, the old ambition, the old passion for material enjoyments, the old incapacity for silent and elevated patriotism, still survived, and were never struck out at or fairly encountered: how then should not the old anomalies re-appear? The garments were torn and buried; but the body and the life remained. Now, as surely as the laws of Providence are constant and inexorable, so surely can there be, for nation or for individual, no short cut to a goal which God has placed at the end of a toilsome and appointed path; no mechanical contrivances for the attainment of an end which is the allotted reward of moral effort and

self-denying virtue; no human fiat for the gratuitous bestowal of blessings for which heaven has appointed a hard and heavy purchase-money. The functions of government—self-government as well as every other—demand qualifications, negative and positive, of no ordinary kind; qualifications which are not inherent or innate; qualifications for which the demand by no means always calls forth the supply. The mere possession of power confers neither capacity nor virtue to exercise it well; and in obtaining the representative institutions that belong to freedom, while still tainted with all the vices of their ancient servitude, the French only seized a treasure of which they had forgotten to secure the key, a weapon of which they had not learned the mastery, a writing in cypher to which they had not got the clue. Caution, humility, obedience to law, long-suffering patience, respect for others' rights, and others' opinions,—these, the *sine qua non* of a constitutional *régime*, they never dreamed of practising;—aspiring to raise the superstructure, while shirking the preliminary drudgery of laying the foundation.

A third reason why parliamentary government, which has answered so well in England, has answered so ill in France, may be found in the fact, that it harmonises with our habits and institutions, but is wholly discrepant and incongruous with those of our neighbours. We govern ourselves; they are governed by officials. Our whole system is municipal, theirs is bureaucratic. We have already spoken of their

centralised administration, and the extent to which it pervades and interpenetrates the daily and domestic life of the nation. In England, the civil servants of the government are few, unconnected, and unobtrusive; in France they are innumerable, omnipotent, and constitute a separate, or organised, and powerful class. In England they confine themselves to absolutely necessary functions; in France they interfere with every transaction and every event of life. In England, as a general rule, a man is only reminded of their existence by the annual visit of the tax-gatherer, unless, indeed, he has to appeal to the law, or has rendered himself amenable to it; in France, scarcely a day passes, scarcely an operation can be concluded, without coming into contact or collision with one or other of their number. Many of the duties performed by officials on the Continent are here performed by elected, parochial, or municipal functionaries, many are left to individual discretion, many more are not performed at all. With us a man's free will is limited only by his neighbour's free will and his neighbour's rights; in France, as in Austria, it can be exercised only subject to government or police permission previously obtained. Restriction is the exception here; it is the rule there. Throughout the Continent, a citizen cannot engage in business, build a house, or take a journey, without leave; and leave is only to be obtained through an established routine of tedious and annoying formalities which would drive an Englishman frantic.

A second operation of this centralised and over-active bureaucracy, has necessarily been to deprive the people of France of all share in those minor acts of government which should form their education for higher offices and more important functions. They have only the faintest vestiges of those municipal institutions which, with us, are such invaluable normal schools of peaceable agitation and political discussion. They have no local senates to prepare them for the central senate of the nation; or, where such exist, they have no real power, and therefore excite little interest. The officials do everything: the people do nothing. They are associated with none of the acts of government except the highest. They choose no one except their legislative representatives and their executive chief—no one at least whose functions are much more than nominal. Under a bureaucracy, they have, and can have, no opportunity of training themselves in those skilful tactics, those mutual forbearances, those timely retreats, those judicious compromises, which form the essence of safe and wise political strategies. In a word, they are almost wholly without those real parochial and communal liberties, which are an indispensable preparation for national and republican liberties. Hence, when summoned to the task of self-government by means of a popular assembly, they are like pilots intrusted with the navigation of a ship who have never been at sea before.

In May 1851 we wrote thus:—

"Republicanism and bureaucracy are incompatible existences. You may call your State a republic if you will—you may modify its form as you please—you may have two chambers or one—you may place at the head a military dictator, or an elective president holding office for one year, for four years, or for ten;—but so long as the administration of public affairs remains central and bureaucratic, the utmost that full representation or universal suffrage can give, is the power of choosing the particular set of busy bodies who shall rule you, or rather the irresponsible individual who shall appoint them. It is not liberty, but merely the selection of your head oppressor. Thus France is in a radically false position, and she has not yet found it out; she is endeavouring unconsciously to unite two incompatibilities. Her government has all the finished and scientific organisation of a despotism, with the political institutions which belong to freedom. Each man has a share in the choice of his legislator and his executive chief; each man is the depositary of a calculable fraction of the sovereign power; but each man is the slave of the passport office, the prefect, the gendarme, and the policeman. The republic of to-day may wake and find itself an empire to-morrow—scarcely an individual Frenchman would *feel* the difference—and not one iota of the administration need be changed. As it exists now, it was the child and may be the parent of imperialism. The whole machinery of autocratic rule is at all times ready for the hand of anyone who can seize it."

What a commentary on our prediction has the revolution of the 2d of December afforded! Surely it should teach France the soundness of our present position—viz., that she cannot serve two masters; she cannot at the same moment "fill her cup from the mouth and from the source of the Nile." *She cannot be at once representative and bureaucratic.* If she desires parliamentary government, she must abolish centralisation. But it is beyond dispute that this system of administration, which to us seems so intolerable, is singularly popular in France; and that

parliaments, which appear to us so indispensable, are by no means popular. The one system is indigenous, and is, therefore, welcome and stable; the other is an exotic, and, therefore, takes no root, shows no stamina, can arrive at no permanency or durability. It did not grow out of the people's wants: it does not harmonise with the people's sentiments. What France wants is what Napoleon gave her—viz., a firm and all-penetrating administrative system, with municipal bodies and national assemblies, whose functions were limited to the representation of grievances;—and, in addition, she wants what he did not give her—and what yet remains a desideratum—a guarantee against the misgovernment of arbitrary power. Now, we in England are too apt to fall into the natural but somewhat pedantic error of supposing that this guarantee is afforded, and can only be afforded, by representative institutions. Yet the whole history of France since her first revolution might have taught us our mistake. She had representative institutions in 1793; yet they did not secure her against the most grinding tyranny which was ever imposed upon a people—a tyranny which was known and proved to be that of a minority —a tyranny, nevertheless, which it required the bloodshed and the *coup* of the 9th Thermidor to overthrow. She had representative institutions in 1799; yet they did not protect her against the wretched misgovernment of the Directory, nor against the daring conspiracy by which, on the 18th Brumaire, both they and the Directory were superseded. Repre-

sentative institutions did not protect France against the arbitrary decrees of Charles X., nor against the necessity of a revolution to dethrone him. They did not enable her to extort reform from Louis Philippe without the same bloody and rudimental expedient. Finally, they did not protect her from the violent usurpation of the President in December last. She has tried them under every form and modification; and under none have they superseded the necessity of revolutions;—*under none have they enabled her to dispense with the same rude and primitive mode of expressing dissatisfaction and desire of change which is resorted to by nations to whom parliaments and ballot-boxes are unknown.* They are effective to preserve the rights and liberties of citizens only where patriotism and a sense of justice are so paramount that instruments cannot be found to trample upon them. They are powerful to deter bad rulers from misgovernment, only when it is known that misgovernment will not be borne. The same *coup d'état* which has overturned the government in France might have taken place in England just as well, if the monarch had been wicked enough to attempt it, the parliament discredited enough to provoke it, the army subservient enough to enact it, the people base enough or wearied enough to submit to it. A representative system contains "the form but not the power" of freedom. It offers no security except on the assumption—true with us, false with our neighbours—that the parties concerned in it will be kept within its limits by a sense

of duty, or a sense of fear. A king of England could not have acted as the President of France has done, not because the parliament and the law forbad him, but simply because the army would not have assaulted the parliament or disobeyed the law, and because the people would not tamely have endured either violation. Representative institutions are merely an established mode of manifesting to the ruler the resolution of the nation. Other simpler, louder, and more cogent modes of manifesting this resolution may be found—not indeed suited to our meridian, but possibly to the meridian of France. This louder language is what France always speaks in whether she has a parliament or not. A central executive chief, chosen by the free vote of the whole people, and liable at any time or at stated intervals to be cashiered by a reversal of that vote if he loses national confidence or incurs national condemnation, may possibly enough be a better system of government for France than any she has yet tried. "But where is the security (we are asked) that such adverse vote will be submitted to by a powerful chief?" True; but in reply we ask—"Have we found that representative assemblies have afforded any such security?" And may not the whole matter be summed up in this brief decision, that no mode of expressing the national will will ever obtain submissive acquiescence, or reach the undisputed dignity of a sacred and supreme decree, till the whole people, those who command as well as those who obey, those who succumb as well as those who prevail, are penetrated and imbued

with a paramount love of justice, a noble servitude to duty, and a solemn reverence for law. When these qualities reign universal and despotic, almost any form of government will suffice to embalm freedom and insure greatness; till these are acquired and maintained, the wisest system of policy ever devised by the most profound and subtle intellect of man can secure them no liberty and bring them no rest.[1]

[1] We particularly recommend to our readers the following quotations from one of the greatest historians and political thinkers of our time :—

"The English in the 16th century were, beyond all doubt, a free people. They had not indeed the outward show of freedom; but they had the reality. They had not as good a constitution as we have; but they had that without which the best constitution is as useless as the king's proclamation against vice and immorality, that which without any constitution keeps rulers in awe—force, and the spirit to use it. . . . A modern Englishman can hardly understand how the people can have had any real security for good government under kings who levied *benevolences* and chid the House of Commons as they would have chid a pack of dogs. People do not sufficiently consider that, though the legal checks were feeble, the natural checks were strong. There was one great and effectual limitation on the royal authority—the knowledge that, if the patience of the nation were severely tried, the nation would put forth its strength, and that its strength would be irresistible.

"The Irish are better represented in parliament than the Scotch, who, indeed, are not represented at all. [This was written before 1832.] But are the Irish better governed than the Scotch? Surely not. But this only proves that laws have no magical or supernatural virtue; that priestcraft, ignorance, and the rage of contending factions may make good institutions useless; that intelligence, sobriety, industry, moral freedom, firm union, may supply in a great measure the defects of the worst representative system. A people whose education and habits are such that, in every quarter of the world, they rise above the mass of those with

The cultivation of these qualities, then, and of the virtues which are allied to them and foster them, is the first necessity of the national life of France. For this process the two requisites are time and rest. The whole morale of France is fearfully perverted and disorganised; *how* fearfully, we endeavoured to describe in a previous paper. The very alphabet of the decalogue has to be revived. Religion has to restore its influence and re-assert its claims. Literature has to be rescued from its grotesque deformities and its hideous pollutions, to be cleansed from its old abominations, and inspired with a diviner life. The foundations of social existence have to be purified and renovated. The school-time and apprenticeship of political action have to be passed through. But how can religion flourish or be heard amid the miserable intrigues or the sanguinary conflicts of balanced factions? How can the moral standard of a people be

whom they mix, as surely as oil rises to the top of the water; a people of such temper and self-government that the wildest popular excesses recorded in their history partake of the purity of judicial proceedings and the solemnity of religious rites; a people whose high and haughty spirit is so forcibly described in the motto which encircles their thistle;—such a people cannot be long oppressed. Any government, however constituted, must respect their wishes, and tremble at their discontents. . . . They will be better governed under a good constitution than under a bad constitution. But they will be better governed under the worst constitution than some other nations under the best. In any general classification of constitutions, that of Scotland must be reckoned as one of the worst—perhaps the worst—of Christian Europe. Yet the Scotch are not ill governed. And the reason simply is that they will not bear to be ill governed."—Macaulay, *Lord Burleigh and his Times.*

raised and cleared amid the tumults of passions constantly excited, and of strife unceasingly renewed? How can literature rise into a purer atmosphere, or breathe a calmer tone, or spread abroad the soothing influence of a serener spirit, when "the loud transactions of the outlying world" keep the cultivated circles in a perpetual fever, which makes all wholesome food distasteful, and all moderate and gentle stimuli insipid? An interval of repose, a breathing time of recollection and recovery, seems to be demanded alike in the name of the material and the spiritual interests of France—alike for the development of her physical resources, and the renovation of her moral life;—a period during which a new generation might grow up, nurtured amid all the sweet sanctities of domestic life, played upon by all the countless influences of social peace, and sheltered from the angry passions and turbulent emotions which muddied and distracted the existence of their fathers and their grandfathers;—a stable rule, against which rebellion would be madness;—a settled law, which should no longer leave obedience or disobedience an open question;—a government which all could respect, and which the bad should fear;—and such just civil and moderate political rights as might be enjoyed and strengthened, and be gradually augmented as they were exercised and mastered:—these seem now what France requires, and what her new ruler, if he be either wise or patriotic, might bestow.

That the French nation as a whole is ardently, though vaguely, attached to the great idea of the first

Revolution, there can, we think, be no reasonable doubt. But there may be great doubt whether French politicians are not as pedantic in supposing that this idea necessarily involves a republic, as English politicians are in conceiving all liberty to be bound up in parliamentary forms. The two prolific principles established in 1789 were, first, the sovereignty of the people; and, secondly, the inadmissibility of a privileged class. Now neither of these principles require that a republic, *according to our notion of one*, should be the form of government selected. They merely require that it shall not be an oligarchy; and that, whatever it be, it shall emanate from the people. Many months ago we were assured by a very intelligent Parisian, that "*La France est républicain et Bonapartiste;*" and that the two were by no means incongruous or incompatible. That France should at one and the same moment cling to a republic, and to the name and memory of the man who destroyed the republic, who rose upon its ruins, and replaced it by one of the most iron and autocratic despotisms the world ever saw, seems at first sight to involve a contradiction; but the inconsistency and improbability will vanish when we reflect that Napoleon professed to complete the idea of a Republic, and to govern in its name—that he took especial care to receive each successive elevation through the forms of a popular election—that a Frenchman's notion of liberty is not personal freedom, but political equality—that a republican form of government is chiefly dear to him as

embodying this inaccurate and incomplete conception —and that his bugbear, his *bête noire*, his pious abomination, is not a chief or master, but a privileged order. He dislikes and dreads an aristocracy, not an autocracy. A nominal Commonwealth, even with an arbitrary despot like Napoleon at its head, provided it be in any sense, whether tacitly or formally, the nation's choice, satisfies a Frenchman's confused and misty ideal. This singular union of what seem to Englishmen two opposed and mutually excluding conditions of polity—republican institutions and imperial sway—is embodied in a most characteristic manner in much of the current coinage of France. Every old five-franc piece contains what we should call an Irish bull. All the money coined under the empire bears "*République Française*" on the one side, and "*Napoléon Empereur*" on the reverse. The face of the coin affirms a fact; the back gives it a point-blank contradiction.

We believe the coin so marked to be a faithful representation of the mind of the great mass of the French people, and to speak their real sentiments. An emperor stamped upon a republic! A regal, central, powerful, brilliant chief, elected or confirmed by popular suffrage. Not freedom from control, but the selection of the great controller. Napoleon understood this well. Chosen by the people, at first by a sort of general acclamation, and afterwards by an almost universal vote, he believed himself, and we believe him to have been, a truer representative of

their wishes and opinions than any assembly that was ever elected. Strong in the strength of this conviction, and confident in his perfect comprehension of the requirements of his country, he framed that wonderful administrative organisation of which we have already spoken, and promulgated the constitution under which, with some modifications, France lived so long. The principle of that constitution was that of a strong and concentrated executive, aided by all the enlightenment and assistance it could derive from the practical knowledge and experience of the ablest men in the country. Napoleon refused no advice, but permitted no interference. The idea never entered into his head of ingrafting upon one another two things as distinct in their origin and as discordant in their operation as the centralised administration, so peculiarly French, and the parliamentary *régime*, so peculiarly British. He looked upon the senate, the legislative body, the council of state, the local and departmental councils, as collections of men from whom he could gain much useful information, and much valuable aid; he never recognised their right to shackle his administrative action, or to step out of their narrow and allotted province. With regard to the provincial councils, he wished that they should be listened to with deference and patience. One of the prefects of the Côte d'Or having failed to listen with due respect to the representations of the municipal body, Napoleon sent him a severe and grave rebuke. But when the council-general of the Haute Garonne, in the same year, took

upon it to criticise a portion of the system of taxation then established, he snubbed it most unmercifully, and explained very clearly to its members the nature and limits of their functions, as follows:—

"Les conseils généraux ne sont point institutés pour donner leurs avis sur les lois et sur les décrets. Ce n'est pas là le but de leur réunion. On n'a ni le besoin ni la volonté de leur demander de conseils.

"Ils ne sont et ne peuvent être que des conseils d'administration. Dans cette qualité, leurs devoirs se bornent à faire connâitre comment les lois et les décrets sont exécutés dans leurs départemens. Ils sont autorisés à représenter les abus qui les frappent, soit dans les détails de l'administration particulière des départemens, soit dans la conduite des administrateurs ; mais ils ne doivent les faire qu'en considérant ce qui est ordonné par les lois ou par les décrets, comme étant le mieux possible.

"Un homme qui sort de la vie privée pour venir passer trois ou quatre jours au chef-lieu de son département fait une chose également inconvenante et ridicule lorsqu'il se mêle de comparer ce qui existe en vertu des lois de l'administration générale actuelle avec ce qui existait dans un autre temps, et lorsqu'à la faveur de quelques observations utiles sur l'administration particulière de son département, il se permet des observations critiques et incohérentes. . . . Sans doute, il a été des temps, où la confusion de toutes les idées, la faiblesse extraordinaire de l'administration générale, les intrigues, qui l'agitaient, faisaient penser à beaucoup de citoyens isolés, qu'ils étaient plus sages que ceux qui les gouvernaient, et qu'ils avaient plus de capacité pour les affaires. *Ce temps n'est plus. L'Empereur n'écoute personne que dans la sphère des attributions respectives.*"

We are far from saying or thinking that the amount of political liberty, and of participation in national affairs, which Napoleon allowed even at the commencement of his consulate, can or ought permanently to satisfy a people like the French. But it well deserves the dispassionate consideration both of our

own *doctrinaires* and our continental imitators, whether a sounder and higher ultimate result may not be obtained by commencing from such moderate germs of political freedom and civil action as may in time, by degrees, and through a process of extorted concessions, be ripened and expanded into an ample and fitting constitution, than by starting with such a constitution ready made—on paper; whether it would not be wise for Frenchmen to follow our example in the slow, painful, and laborious steps by which we have achieved and wrung out our liberties—practising them as we won them—consolidating them as we went along—rather than to grasp at the finished treasure, without learning the lessons which teach its value, or acquiring the mystery over it, which confers its value and guarantees its security. As in the grand old fictions of the Rosicrucian fancy, those aspirants after superhuman power and earthly immortality—who seized prematurely on the arch-gift and inhaled the rich elixir, before a long course of strengthening toil, purifying abstinence from earthly passions, and resolute crucifixion of all low desires, had fitted their frames to breathe a rarer atmosphere, and gaze upon intenser light—were stricken into insanity or dazzled into blindness by the awful revelation and the intolerable stimulus, so surely do the exciting air, the intoxicating draught, the wild delight, the terrible power of liberty, ask for their healthy endurance and their noble exercise, preparation scarcely less tedious and elaborate, a soul scarcely less purified and strengthened.

To gaze upon the splendour before the sight is purged and fortified, is to rush not into light, but into darkness.[1]

If Louis Napoleon, as both his writings and his actions appear to indicate, takes the same view of the needs and capabilities of France which we have here endeavoured to explain, and if he be really animated by that partially pure patriotism which consists in wishing to connect his name indissolubly with the grandeur and regeneration of his country, we believe that he *may* yet employ his tenure of power in a manner which will cause its origin to be forgotten and forgiven. That he *will* do so, is rather our hope than our sanguine expectation. It is what one of their own philosophers described a future state to be, *un grand peut-être*. It certainly seems somewhat foolish to fancy that a man who has attained his supremacy by violence should use that supremacy for good. It seems the very simplicity of sanguineness to expect that a man who, in marching to his end, has trampled all legality under foot, should, when that end has been reached, proclaim, enforce, and submit to legality in future. It is the curse and the punishment of guilt, in public even more than in private life, that one crime almost always necessitates another and another. It is difficult for a usurper to control and restrain the tools of his usurpation. It is difficult for the victor in

[1] "Constitutions," said Sir James Mackintosh, "*cannot be made;* they must *grow*." In this profound aphorism may we learn the secret of French failures.

a civil strife to restore freedom and power of action to the vanquished. It is difficult for a chief whose conduct is open to the harshest criticism and the bitterest invective, to permit fair license to the tongues and pens of his antagonists. Nevertheless, on his ability and courage to dare all this — *in a while* depends Louis Napoleon's exoneration and success. We cannot too often repeat that he owes a great expiation to his country. He has committed a deliberate act of violence and treason, which can be pardoned only on condition of its being the last. He has seized power in a manner which only the beneficial use he makes of it can induce history to forget or gild. Yet it is undeniable that he has examples before him of others who have stolen a sceptre and yet have wielded it in the service of their country. It is still left for him, by imitating their excellences and avoiding their errors, to throw a veil over all that is deplorable and disreputable in the past. Augustus waded to a throne through an amount of bloodshed and of perfidy of which Louis Napoleon has given us only a faint and feeble reflex; yet by giving to Rome a long respite from sixty years of civil strife and tyrannous dominion, by developing her resources, re-organising her empire, cultivating her intelligence, and laying the foundation for 350 years of peace, he has left behind him a name associated for ever with an age of political and literary glory. Cromwell dismissed a parliament scarcely less despised or discredited than that of France, with a degree of violence and ignominy as great as Louis

Napoleon inflicted; yet he governed better, and raised the name of England higher, than any sovereign had done since the Great Queen. In 1799 Napoleon drove out the Council of Five Hundred by the actual use of the bayonet, and installed himself as First Consul by an autocratic fiat and a military force; yet his name is still dear to France—less on account of that long series of splendid campaigns, which brought her at first so much glory, and afterwards so much discomfiture and mortification—than because, for the first time since 1789, he gave her a strong and settled government; because he made her feel that she had a masterhand and a sagacious pilot at the helm; because he gave her rest from intrigues, conspiracies, and the wearisome and humiliating succession of imbecilities which had so long misruled her; because he restored, under wise and stern conditions, her shattered and desecrated altars; because, lastly and chiefly, he reorganised the dissolved and decrepit system of administration on a basis which has never since been shaken, and educed order out of chaos. Louis Napoleon may find in the history of his predecessors something of example, but far more of warning. Three especial errors he must guard against: he must avoid that love of war and too exclusive reliance on the army, which eventually lost Napoleon his crown; he must avoid the reaction towards priestcraft and the dread of a free press, which led to the overthrow of Charles X.; and that neglect of the sentiments and demands of the middle classes, which prepared the way for the ignominious catastrophe of Louis Philippe.

First, If Louis Napoleon relies exclusively on the troops to support his government he will commit a fatal blunder. They cannot be trusted in to coerce the nation. They may be relied on for a *coup d'état* against an Assembly respected by no one, deserted by the *bourgeoisie*, and abused by the working classes; but assuredly they cannot be relied on for a systematic crusade against the liberties, feelings, and affections of their fellow-citizens. It has been all along pretty well understood, that, though ready enough to fight against *émeutiers* and socialists of Blanqui's caste, they could never be relied upon to put down any insurrection in which the National Guard sided with the masses. In each individual instance, in each sudden crisis, the habit of obedience and the recollection of their military oath would probably prevail, and cause them to obey the orders of their immediate superiors. But this would no longer be the case as soon as they had time to consult and discuss among themselves, and as soon as they perceived that they were made the tools of a regular system inimical to those whom they loved, and to whose ranks they belonged, and to the interests of that nation of which they formed a recognised and sympathising part. They soon learn and strongly retain the instinct of dicipline and the *esprit du corps;* but they never wholly lose the sentiment of citizenship. French soldiers are not, like English ones, chosen from the lowest portion of the populace, and enlisted virtually for life. The conscription takes them nearly indiscriminately from all ranks, and they serve, or are required

to serve, only for seven years. After that time, unless they wish otherwise, they return to mingle with the mass of their fellow-citizens. The result of this is two-fold: first, that they retain most of the feelings and predilections of the classes out of which they were called yesterday, and into which they will be reabsorbed to-morrow; and, secondly, that France swarms with thousands of trained and disbanded soldiers, equal in skill and experience to those actually enrolled, but as full of political interests and predilections as any of their compatriot civilians. Thus the army in France is not, as in England, a distinct body set apart from the nation, and having no feelings and opinions that are not bounded by the barrack-walls. It is merely that portion of the people which in each particular year chances to be under arms. One-seventh of them were simple citizens—sons, brothers, husbands, before everything—last-year; one-seventh of them again become simple citizens—sons, brothers, husbands, before everything—this year. The idea of using them against the NATION, it would therefore be folly in Louis Napoleon to entertain.

The officers of the army, again, are chosen from among those middle classes out of whose hands the late *coup d'état* is supposed to have wrested power, They belong to these classes, they marry into them, they frequent their society, share their feelings, imbibe their sentiments. Like them, they read the newspapers, and feel the deprivation when newspapers are suppressed. In proportion to their rank and education

will be their susceptibility to all those social influences which will make them reluctant and unsafe tools for resolute misgovernment.

Moreover, the moment the army perceives that Louis Napoleon's government depends on it alone, that moment it becomes supreme, exacting, jealous, and tyrannical. That moment also it becomes the arena of the most desperate personal intrigues. That moment gives to Louis Napoleon a score of formidable rivals. He is a civilian. He has won his spurs in no memorable battle; and it is only a military chief who can reign by the sword. If the army is to be the centre and instrument of power, there are many who have a better title than he has to seize it. If, therefore, he relies on the army alone, as an instrument of misgovernment, he is leaning on a spear which will break and pierce him.

Above all, Louis Napoleon must beware of so far misreading the history of the great man whose name he bears, as to look to war either for safety or for power. Let the nephew well understand and lay to heart the real foundations of the uncle's glories,—the true reason why the mere name is one of such magic,—the true reason why that name secured his own election, while yet an unknown or an ill-known man. It was not Napoleon's military, but his *civil*, services that made him the idol of the nation from 1800 to 1804; it was a repetition, not of his military, but of his civil services, that, in 1848, France looked for from his nephew, when she chose him as her chief at

a moment when a similar confusion to that which Napoleon had closed seemed to call for a similar elucidation, and made the people turn with hope and affection to the mere echo of a great name. Napoleon's military career, magnificent and brilliant as it was, exhausted the nation, wearied the army, carried mourning and desolation into every family: Napoleon's military grandeur all passed away, and left France no wider, no greater, no richer than he found her. But his *Code Civil* has maintained its ground in every country where he planted it; his clear and simple coinage has been everywhere adopted and confirmed by the sovereigns whom he had ejected, and who returned after his defeat; and his elaborate and scientific system of centralised administration has never once been shaken or meddled with by any of the monarchs or revolutions that have succeeded him. The trophies of war have all perished: the trophies of peace have all survived. The former made France miserable: the latter have made her a celebrity and an example. The former landed Napoleon in a wretched banishment, and gave

"His name a doubt to all the winds of Heaven:"

the latter placed him high among the permanent benefactors of mankind.

To Louis Napoleon, situated as he is, a war would probably be about the most shallow and suicidal policy he could pursue. In the first place, till firmly and fairly established on his new throne, a foreign war

would only let loose his domestic foes. No wise chief will march against an enemy, if he leaves half-subdued treason and angry discontent behind him in his own camp. In the second place, a war undertaken in these days must either be a war against despots with insurgents for allies; or a war against freedom with despots for allies. A war of the first kind would not only concentrate against the President all the continental powers, but would involve him in a net of incongruities and perplexities which would aggravate ten-fold the perplexities of his actual position. It could be successful only by the aid of those republican parties in Hungary, Italy, and Prussia whose equivalents and *analoga* in France he had just repressed with such stern severity. He, the military usurper, the violent destroyer of a free constitution, would have to hoist the banner of liberty, and march to the watch-word of the people's war-cry. The hero of the *coup d'état*, the imprisoner of inviolable deputies, the gaoler of popular generals, would have to proclaim everywhere liberty to the captive, and the restoration of rights to the oppressed. If, on the other hand, he joined the European autocrats, and made war on liberty, and on England, Belgium, and Sardinia as its representatives, he would commit a still more fatal blunder. A war with England would be very popular, no doubt, with many Frenchmen, but it would be hateful to many more. It would be a proclamation of deliberate hostility against the cause of constitutional rights and liberties all over

the world. It would bring him, the representative and chief of a nation which still clings to the ideas of the first great revolution, into close alliance with the old worn-out tyrannies of Europe, and degrade him into the ape and flunkey of the withered legitimacy of the world. It would bring the republic of France, which swears by universal suffrage, into direct collision with every state in which any vestige of popular election yet survives. It would involve her in a crusade against the freedom for which she has fought so gallantly, and suffered and sacrificed so much. Such a war would be absolutely detestable to all the better spirits of the French nation—to the intelligent classes whom it is so important for Louis Napoleon to conciliate to his *régime*—to the moderate as well as the extreme—to all, except those who love plunder, and those who are thirsty for revenge. The republicans of France sympathise deeply with the struggling patriots of every land. To them the expedition against Rome was the most hateful act of the Assembly. The Orleanists and Moderates feel that they must make common cause with the supporters of free constitutions and limited monarchy throughout the globe. The nation as a whole feel that, if the great contest and victory of 1789 is to bear any fruit—if it is not to be regarded as a gigantic and insane blunder—if it was an emancipation to be gloried in, not a crime to be repented of—France must remain the ally and champion of national independence, and popular rights, wherever

they may be asserted. To espouse the cause of depotism, to attack the free states of Europe, would be to blaspheme the past, to deny her mission, to desecrate her flag. For France to league with the Russian autocrat, the Prussian perjurer, the Austrian tyrant against constitutional England and Sardinia, and republican America and Switzerland, would indeed be for "the dog to return to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

A war must either be successful or unsuccessful; in either event it would be fatal to Louis Napoleon's supremacy. If unsuccessful, the French would never forgive him for having provoked it. The army would desert him; the people would despise him; the gentry would hate him; the whole nation would cry out against him; every private interest and every patriotic passion would combine to assail him; and the very foundations of his power would crumble away like sand. If, on the other hand, the war were to be glorious and triumphant, it would insure his downfall as infallibly, though from another cause. Louis Napoleon is not a soldier. His army must be intrusted to the leadership of the ablest generals he can appoint. His victories must be won by others. He must select for the supreme command, not the men he can rely upon as devoted to himself, but the men whom the public voice or the desire of the troops shall proclaim to be most fitted for the post. The first brilliant exploit will give him a rival. The

first glorious campaign will designate his dethroner and successor. He may give the signal for war; but others will reap its laurels, others will gather in its fruits, others will monopolise its glory. A war would at once place the very men whom he has just circumvented, insulted, and imprisoned, at the head of the army, by means of which he has climbed to power. A war would at once place Cavaignac, Changarnier, Bedeau, and Lamoricière above him. And if one of these should display any portion of that political and administrative genius, which the life of camps so often develops, and affords so many opportunities of manifesting; if he should be gifted with that terse and stirring eloquence which soldiers often possess; and if solid and practical capacity should give him over the reason of his countrymen, that ascendant which his victories have already given him over their imagination,—then, assuredly, Louis Napoleon would have found his master, and the Assembly its merciless avenger.

Secondly, Louis Napoleon must especially guard himself against the very probable mistake of supposing, that because he has the support of the army and of the masses—of the numerical majority, and of the organised forces of the nation—he can afford to despise the hostility, or dispense with the allegiance, of the middle and educated classes. He has already given some indications of his tendency to fall into this error. He is said to be contemplating the abolition of the vexatious and burdensome *octroi*, the imposition

of an income-tax, and the promotion of extensive public works, with a view to satisfy the poorer classes. But measures of this sort will not suffice. The great body of the ignorant peasantry have indeed voted for him as representing in their minds the cause of order, and the brilliant recollections of the Consulate and the Empire. Large numbers of the working people in the towns have also voted for him under the impression that he will unite the two incompatibilities, of a large remission of taxation, and a vigorous increase of public expenditure. But these alone cannot maintain him. The town ranks of all sections are always unreasonable in their expectations from a new *régimé*, and therefore certain to encounter disappointment, and to change their admiration into disgust. Moreover, in no country, least of all in France, can the contest ever be a hopeful one for despotism, when all the cultivation and intelligence of the nation is on one side, and only brute numbers on the other. In no strife in modern days is the *major vis* ever on the side of the *mere* numerical majority. The skill, knowledge, discipline, mental influence, intellectual resources, and moral weight, of the middle and upper ranks, will always be an immense over-match for mere masses of ignorant, untrained, and stupid *prolétaires*. Louis Napoleon, therefore, must govern so as to conciliate the adherence of the worthy writers, the financiers, and the literary and political notabilities of France—the natural leaders of her people,—the representatives of her material interests and her moral power.

Now, to these classes, material interests are not the only ones, nor social comfort and physical wellbeing the sole necessaries of existence. Selfish and worldly as too many of them are, they cannot live by bread alone. They demand a scope for their activity, an arena for their talents. They will no longer be content with the old frivolities of the theatre and the *salon*. They have eaten of the tree of political knowledge; and, henceforth, the paradise of the senses and the fancy is disenchanted in their eyes. They have known the fascinations of political action, and will not again acquiesce in being utterly debarred from it. It will be dangerous to attempt to re-convert them into cyphers, and impossible to confine their energies within the poor and narrow circle of social trifling which once sufficed. The President must reckon with this natural ambition, and this rational activity. His new constitution must be such as to offer an adequate and worthy field for the power and aspirations of the practical intellect of France. His administration must provide places wherein the capacities of the restless and the ardent may find ample, safe, and serviceable development. He must prove to the rising and the experienced politicians of the country, that the new system offers great prizes for the ambitious, wide scope for the active, noble occupation for the high-minded. He must show them that there are worthier and loftier vocations for the trained and ripened intellect than party squabbles, or parliamentary intrigues, in aiding the action of the State, and developing the

resources of the country. His cabinet must be a place where genuine ability of every kind may find an entrance. His senate must be an assembly to which it will not be a degradation to belong. His house of representatives must be a body entitled to speak freely and discuss without reticence and fear.

Further, Louis Napoleon must remember that the educated classes will not long endure to be debarred from the full privileges and enjoyments of their education. It is idle to imagine that men gifted with the wonderful power of precise and brilliant expression, which distinguishes the French, will not chafe and rebel if condemned to an enforced silence, or compelled to restrain their utterances within limits, or to direct them into channels which it may suit a despot to prescribe. Men conscious of capacity to think worthily and to write splendidly on the exciting questions of government and war, will not tamely permit themselves to be warned off their favourite and chosen fields, and relegated to the duller walks of science or fancy. Genius and talent, in every department of literature, like gunpowder, becomes dangerous by being compressed. They must be enlisted in the service of the government, or they will be arrayed against it, and in the end will be too strong for it. A free press is even a better safety-valve than a free constitution for the restless intellects and fiery tempers of the cultivated classes. In addition to this, we must bear in mind that the French are great readers. The circulation of the Parisian newspapers is far beyond

that of the London journals. Books and pamphlets, too, sell there in numbers which appear to us nearly fabulous. M. Granier de Cassagnac is said to have sold 100,000 copies of his recent *brochure*. To most Parisians of any education, and to many provincials, their daily paper, with its brilliant "leader," and its exciting *feuilleton*, is as necessary as their daily breakfast. To deprive them of their habitual intellectual pabulum, or to render it so innutritious and insipid, as it would inevitably become under a censorship, would render the President almost as unpopular with the Parisians as if he were to endeavour, actually and without metaphor, to starve them into allegiance. The support then of the thousand writers, and the million readers of France, Louis Napoleon can only conciliate by respecting, and restoring as soon as it can be done with safety, the freedom of the press.

Lastly, and above all, Louis Napoleon must beware of relying on the PRIESTS. They are about the worst, the weakest, and the most treacherous reed upon which he could lean. We regard the tendency he has shown in this direction with more jealousy than any of his other proceedings. It looks like a projected coalition between the two armies of despotism —the military and the ecclesiastical. It is true that one of the saddest and most menacing features of the present aspect of French society is the absence of a religious spirit. It is true that any one who should reanimate religion in the nation would be the greatest of human benefactors. But playing into the hands

of the Jesuits will have precisely, a contrary effect. They are the notorious and irreconcilable enemies of the central ideas which lay at the bottom of the great French Revolution, and which are still enshrined in the hearts of the whole nation,—viz., the sovereignty of the people, as opposed to the divine right of kings, and the reign of equal justice, as opposed to class privileges. All that the country has of noble in its recent history is arrayed against the priests. All the long years of its degradation and dishonour are associated with their rule. Everything generous and lofty, everything popular and stimulating, in its literature, has proclaimed relentless war against priestcraft under any form. Right or wrong, priests in general, and Jesuits in particular, are hated by everything in France (except moral ignorance and rare fanaticism, and legitimacy, with its sinister and ulterior designs), as the foes to enlightenment, the upholders of humbug, the allies of despotism, and the serpents who creep into and poison domestic life. The restoration of them, even to most modified and regulated influence, was one of the most daring, difficult, and unpopular of Napoleon's achievements. Notwithstanding the strong reasons which then existed for doing it, notwithstanding the consummate skill and caution with which he did it, it was a reactionary step, which his supporters could hardly tolerate or forgive. The attempt to associate the priests once more to state authority had done much to undermine the influence of Charles X., before their mischievous advice led him to

that attack upon the press by which he forfeited his throne. The active intellects of the French nation, in immense preponderance—it is most deplorable that it should be so, but it is so—regard Christianity as a deception and a chimera; and their religious teachers must resemble the archbishop of Paris much more, and the bishop of Chartres much less than the great body of them do at present, before this sad error can be rectified. And so long as this is the case, any truckling to the priests, any favouritism towards them, any signs of an intention to re-impose upon the nation a system which its intellectual leaders believe to be a sham, will be resented as an insult. Christianity itself is a glorious truth as well as a great fact; but to the educated portion of the nation the substitution of priestly despotism in its place represents the system which Rousseau discredited, which D'Alembert, Helvetius, and Condorcet, and all the great literary names connected with the social and political changes of the 18th century, won their fame by contending with and overthrowing. The French may endure the restoration of the imperial despotism—never that of priestly sway. They may again come under the dominion of the Bastile—never under that of the Inquisition. Louis Napoleon could scarcely commit a blunder which will more surely and more righteously combine against him all that is virulent and all that is selfish, all that is noble and all that is vicious, all that loves freedom and all that loves fame, all that loves truth and all that loves power, in the intellectual and social world of

France,—than by holding out a hand of favour and alliance to the Jesuits. The army will despise him for it. The *salons* will ridicule and sneer at him for it. The press will hate him for it almost to a man. The stern Puritan Guizot, the unprincipled and brilliant Thiers, the learned, eloquent, and democratic historian Michelet, the richly gifted and artist-minded George Sand, the dignified and honoured philosopher Victor Cousin, even the disgracefully-popular ransacker of moral cesspools and obscene *cloacæ*, Eugene Sue,—men who could join in nothing else, who have scarcely one other sentiment in common,—would all unite in one wild cry of mingled scorn, indignation, and disgust at the ruler who could dream of replacing France under the broken crozier and the stained and tattered surplice of the priest.

Nor could the support of the clergy, thus dearly purchased as it must be, ever be relied on by Louis Napoleon. He can scarcely be weak enough to imagine that an organised hierarchy, whose head and centre is in Rome, can ever give faithful or cordial adherence to a man who has risen on the ruin and succeeded to the inheritance of anointed kings. He cannot believe that the servants of a Church whose first dogma, and whose pervading idea, is the supremacy of divine right, can in their hearts espouse a cause based on military usurpation, and sanctioned by an appeal to universal suffrage. He cannot flatter himself that the alliance between the child of popular sovereignty and the proclaimers of royal sacredness and inviolability, can

ever be more than a treacherous and hollow truce. He must know that, by the necessity of the case, the Catholic clergy—such of them at least as receive their impulse from Rome—are secret and zealous Legitimists; that they regard him only as a warming-pan; and that they propose to use him as the restorer of an edifice which, when ready, the old and rightful heirs are to inhabit,—as the instrument for the recovery of a patrimony which, as soon as it is secured against the common enemy, they intend to transfer to the legal owner. Knowing all this, we can scarcely suppose, however Louis Napoleon may coquet with the Jesuits for a temporary purpose, that he will commit the enormous blunder of calling them into his councils, or sharing with them his power.

We have said that we are not sanguine as to Louis Napoleon's success in the position which he has so violently and unwarrantably seized. The chapter of accidents is always too rich in France to induce us to venture on a prophecy. Our object in this Paper has been to trace the causes which have led to the catastrophe; to explain the reasons why we think the French nation may have been altogether on a wrong tack in their endeavour to naturalise a parliamentary government, to call attention to the irreconcilability of such government with the centralised and bureaucratic administration which is apparently so popular, and is certainly so fixed; and to show how the powers which are held by the President, may be wielded for the benefit of his country, if he be really

animated by a patriotic spirit, and gifted with adequate capacities.

Since this article was in type, the President has published his constitution and fulminated his decrees of banishment. The first we have no time nor space to criticise: the latter we cannot pass over without the expression of our conviction that they are a great blunder, as well as a great crime. Such indiscriminate and illegal severity has alarmed and staggered his supporters, and enraged more than it has terrified his enemies. It is an indication and confession of weakness,—a wanton trampling upon legal forms, a menacing inauguration of a reign of terror. Already the murmurs of the Parisian *salons* have warned him of his mistake and his danger. Confiscation has now followed proscription, and the whole arsenal of tyranny seems to be opened.

III.

ENGLAND AS IT IS.[1]

THIS book is a somewhat undigested mass of valuable matter, interspersed occasionally with reflections of much interest, and observations of considerable originality. The author is unquestionably a man of talent; he writes with vigour and smartness; he has taken pains in the collection of most of his materials; and his statistics are arranged with great care and managed with unusual skill. In this point he is much superior to his prototype and apparent master, Mr Alison. But his range of topics is too wide to allow of his doing justice to any one of them, and his book is disfigured with an unwieldy series of quotations from blue books, newspapers, and reviews; from publications that never had authority, and publications that have long been superseded. An enumeration of the heads of some of his chapters, will give an idea of the extent of ground which he careers over:—"Population;" "Occupations of the People;" "Taxation, Revenue, Expenditure;"

[1] From the "Edinburgh Review," April 1851.

England as it is; Political, Social, and Industrial, in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century. By WILLIAM JOHNSTON, Barrister-at-Law. London: 1851.

"Theory of Progress;" "Condition of the People;" "Crime;" "Manners, Conversation;" "Rich and Poor;" "Railways;" "Sir Robert Peel;" "The Press;" "The Tenth of April;" "The Church;" "Solicitors and Attorneys;" "Supply of London with Meat;" "Drinking Habits;" "The Poor Law;" and many others. All these grave topics are disposed of in a positive off-hand manner, and in the tone we might expect from a man of lively and inquiring mind, whose Tory predilections and protectionist opinions are often so one-sided, as to show us as much of "England as it is not," as of "England as it is."

The book, on the whole, however, is decidedly readable, though, besides its discursiveness, it has two rather serious faults. If we except two or three chapters, the writer has no personal or practical knowledge of any of the subjects which he treats. The chapters devoted to law and the legal profession will be interesting to the unlearned, because there the author is comparatively *en pays de connaissance;* and from the same cause, the chapters on Manners and Conversation are about the best in the book, because society —that is, London literary, legal, and political society —at least in one of its many-coloured aspects, appears to be familiar to him; not so life in the provinces, and society among the middle classes. While, of the people—of the component parts of our social structure in detail—of the character, feelings, and position of the masses—he knows practically nothing, having looked at them through the medium of books alone.

His source of information on these points is sometimes the "Times" newspaper; sometimes an obscure pamphlet; sometimes a party review; sometimes a blue book. He speaks as a barrister from his brief, who makes the most of the materials furnished to him, but who has never come into personal communication with his client, or seen the premises or machine on which he descants so fluently to the jury.

The second great fault of the book is the absence of any distinct purpose or object. It is not easy to understand why the author should have been at the pains of writing it, unless with the view (which he seems to have entertained at the beginning) of giving a general picture of England to some foreign friend. For this, however, the work would be at once redundant and imperfect. For any more definite aim it is decidedly defective. The want of a back-bone—of a central idea, to connect and bind together the miscellaneous matter of which the book consists—of some clear principle or set of opinions to be illustrated and enforced—of some distinct object to be achieved,—is strongly felt by the reader as he goes on; and we wonder it did not manifest itself to the writer likewise.

As far, however, as any one prevailing idea can be detected in the book, it is that England is going to the dogs: as far as any distinct purpose can be traced, it is to prove our national peril and retrogression. It would be unjust to class "England as it is," with the absurd and malignant work of Ledru Rollin ("La Décadence de l'Angleterre"); but there are some

undeniable resemblances between them. Both authors are disposed to paint English society *en noir*, to think that our imperial star is on the wane, that our national maturity is past, and that old age and decrepitude are at hand. It is natural that a foreigner of virulent passions and disappointed ambition, an exile and a fugitive, should thus gloat over the fancied ruin of a rival nation, even while he owes to its generous and powerful hospitality, his security from the vengeance of his own countrymen: it is, perhaps, natural also, that an English politician, seriously attached to the party so long dominant, and so recently and signally defeated, should distrust the success and dread the consequences of a course of policy which he has all his life conscientiously opposed, and that he should be seen mistaking the discomfiture of his party for the ruin of his country; but we were scarcely prepared for the easy indifference with which Mr Johnston enumerates the symptoms of our national decay, and the quiet complacency with which he accepts our decline as a settled historical fact. For ourselves, we have better trust and stronger faith; we believe that we flourished and advanced under Tory ministers and a restrictive tariff; and we are not without hopes that we shall continue to flourish and advance even under a Whig government, and a free commercial policy. And since we entirely disagree with Mr Johnston as to the decay, both actual and prospective, of Great Britain, we propose to join issue with him on this, the prominent conception of his book.

His idea concerning our national prospects and condition, may be gathered from the following laboured prophecy which he quotes from Mr Alison, and seems to adopt in its entireness :—

"A survey of the fate of all the great empires of antiquity, and a consideration of the close resemblance which the vices and passions by which they were distinguished at the commencement of their decline bear to those by which we are agitated, leads (?) to the melancholy conclusion that we are fast approaching, if we have not already attained, the utmost limit of our greatness; and that a long decay is destined to precede the fall of the British empire. During that period our population will remain stationary or recede; our courage will, perhaps, abate; our wealth will certainly diminish; our ascendancy will disappear; and at length the queen of the waves will sink into an eternal, though not forgotten slumber. It is more likely than that these islands will ever contain human beings for whom sustenance cannot be obtained, that its fields will return, in the revolutions of society, to their pristine desolation, and the forest resume its wonted domain, and savage animals regain their long lost habitations; that a few fishermen will spread their nets on the ruins of Plymouth, and the beaver construct his little dwelling under the arches of Waterloo Bridge; the towers of York arise in dark magnificence amid an aged forest, and the red deer sport in savage independence round the Athenian pillars of the Scottish metropolis."

The warning symptoms of this impending desolation, Mr Johnston traces in the deteriorating material position of our working classes; in the decay of friendly intercourse between them and their superiors; in the increase of crime; in the excessive toil and struggle for existence everywhere manifest around us; in the scoffing and frivolous tone of society; and in the dwarfed and degraded spirit of our statesmanship;—signs and menaces which, if their existence could be

clearly proved, would go far to justify his gloomiest and worst surmises. In most of these points, however, we differ with him as to fact; in some, as to causes; in others, as to the inference to be drawn from them. Let us take them in succession.

First, as to the *Physical Condition of the Masses.* —Mr Johnston quotes largely from a pamphlet by Dr Kay, published *twenty years ago,* describing the unpaved streets and unhealthy dwellings of the poor in many parts of Manchester, at a time when sanatory arrangements had not yet commanded that degree of public attention which they have now received; from a report by Mr Symons, published *fifteen years ago,* depicting a similar state of things in Glasgow; from a statistical inquiry about the same date, showing that 35,000 of the population of Liverpool lived in cellars, *which have since been prohibited as dwellings* by Act of Parliament most injudiciously; and, after adding a few similar testimonies, he proceeds,—

"From all this evidence I conclude that, as regards the great mass of the people, there is no reason for congratulation upon the progress of wealth, virtue, or happiness. The mercantile middle class become opulent through the use of cheap substitutes for labour, but the labourers sink in the scale of social existence. In the acquisition of wealth the nation has made great progress, but in that distribution of it which seems best calculated to impart moderate comfort on the one hand, and to abate the pomp of superior position and the insolence of riches on the other, the science of modern times is at fault, while the selfishness connected with it revels, for the present, in unabated triumph."

In another place he says:—

"We regard with admiring wonder the inventions of science, and our respect for human ingenuity is vastly increased; but

when we inquire how far the use of them has benefited the great mass of the people, we are compelled to dismiss all sense of triumph in their achievements. . . . It seems to me that there can be no doubt of the total failure of the working class to accomplish any advance at all. . . . I do not find it specifically denied by any class of politicians that since 1819 the rich have been growing richer, and the poor more poor."

Now all these statements we hold to be utterly untrue. Mr Johnston has fallen into the common error of writers who treat of subjects of which they have not enough personal cognisance to enable them to read with judgment and discrimination. There is evidence enough—that is, printed assertions—always to be found in favour of every theory and every opinion; and an advocate, therefore, who merely pleads from his brief, is at the mercy of the particular set of documents which may chance to be put into his hands, since he has no independent knowledge in virtue of which he can decide upon their value. He may form a perfectly honest and a perfectly sound judgment as far as the data before him are concerned; but unless these data contain all that is required for the formation of a just opinion, or unless his own acquaintance with the case can supply the deficiency of the documentary evidence supplied him, he may be led into the strangest fallacies, and his decision may be utterly worthless. From Mr Busfield Ferrand's harangues, from Mr Sadler's Committee, and even from Lord Ashley's speeches, Mr Johnston might derive, by the strictest and fairest process of deduction, notions upon the wretchedness and sickness

of the factory population, which a walk through a cotton mill, a conversation with an operative, or a study of the blue books issued by the Factory Commission and the Factory Inspectors, would dissipate into thin air. Written evidence, whether statistical or other, is only available and safe in the hands of a man who can sift and test it. In the present case it has led Mr Johnston grievously astray;—for it is not difficult to show that the inventions of science, so far from having been turned to the exclusive service of the rich and great, have been directed in a paramount and peculiar manner to comfort and facilitate the daily existence of the working classes;—that the augmentation of national wealth has been participated in to a remarkable degree by all ranks in the community, and has added greatly to the comforts of the poor and needy;—and that there is abundant reason for suspecting the common assertion of "the rich growing richer, and the poor poorer," to be the reverse of true.

We are not disposed to draw a picture *couleur de rose* of the condition of our people, any more than we are willing to accept our author's *silhouette en noir*. We have been too long and too near witnesses of their struggles and their sorrows, to feel any temptation to ignore them, or make light of them. But we must remember that the question is not now,—whether our present state is satisfactory? but, Is it improving or deteriorating? Are we advancing, or retrograding in civilisation and well-being? Is our actual progress so

slow, as to make us despair about the future? or, worse still, Is our improvement confined to the outside, the surface, and the summit, while all within is hollow, and a varnished decay is busy at our vitals? Admitting then, and deploring, as we do, that the condition of the masses is far from the ideal we might form, far even from a point at once desirable, attainable, and due,—we affirm that it has improved, and is still improving, with a rapidity, and in a direction, which, viewed aright, justify the most sanguine anticipations.

"The inventions of science have not benefited the poorer classes."—Have they not? Look at railroads, the great scientific marvel of the age, which, in the course of twenty years, have brought the remotest parts of our islands within twenty-four hours of each other, which have quintupled our locomotive speed, and multiplied the amount of our locomotion in a ratio that baffles calculation. Who have been the chief gainers by them? Clearly the poor, to whom, formerly, locomotion was a thing almost impossible; who, for the most part, passed the whole of life in the narrow circuit of their native hamlet, or the town in which they were apprenticed; who frequently lived and died without visiting the next valley, or crossing the range of low hills which were ever before their eyes; who, if compelled by dire necessity to travel, trudged painfully on foot, weary, limping, and heavy-laden; who, on their rare holidays, could find no recreation but wandering in familiar fields, or boozing

at the wonted tavern. The wealthy could always travel in luxurious carriages with spirited post-horses, which carried them along at the rate of eighteenpence a mile. The middle classes indulged their restless and curious propensities on the top of the mail coach, a mode of conveyance to which even now they look back with affection and regret. But the poor, till this great application of science to their use, were absolutely rooted to their place of birth: they heard of London, or York, or the mountains, or the lakes, as distant scenes replete with wonders and attractions, but as inaccessible as Paradise to them. Now, every fine Sunday, every summer holiday, sees hundreds of thousands of artisans rush from the smoky recesses of Liverpool or London to make merry with their friends, or refresh themselves after a week of toil with the gay verdure and invigorating air of the country. For the smallest sums, they are carried in cheap trips to see York minster, or to wander on the cliffs of Scarborough, or bathe in the sea at Dover;—they are poured out in multitudes on the shores of Windermere; and conveyed, almost without any intervention of their own, to London, to Dublin, to Paris, at a cost which few among them cannot, by an effort, manage to afford. What these new facilities must have done to counterbalance and compete with the low pleasures of intemperance and gambling, how they have interfered with the cock-fight, and unpeopled the racecourse, and replaced the bull-bait, may be easily conceived. A "cheap trip" is now, with the

artisan class, the established mode of passing a leisure day. In 1848, the number who left Manchester alone, in Whitsun week, by these excursion trains, was 116,000; in 1849 it had risen to 150,000; and last year it reached 202,000. Mr Johnston himself gives a table (vol. i. p. 285) which should have prevented him from penning the rash sentence we have quoted from him on the uselessness of scientific improvements to the poor. In 1849 the number who travelled by railway were as follows:—

	Passengers.	Receipts.
First Class . . .	7,292,811	£1,927,768
Second . . .	23,521,650	2,530,689
Third and Parliamentary	32,890,323	1,816,476

Thus it appears that the poorer classes travelled by railway to the number of nearly 33,000,000, and could afford to spend in that mode of recreation nearly £2,000,000. They outnumbered the middle classes in the proportion of *four to three*, and the wealthier classes in the proportion *four to one*.

"The condition of the working classes has deteriorated, and their command over the comforts of life has diminished." Has it? Let us look at facts again. At the close of the last century, rye, oaten, and barley bread were extensively consumed throughout the country: according to one authority, rye bread was the habitual food of one-seventh of the population: it is now entirely disused, and the use of wheaten bread is almost universal even among the poorest classes. To what extent their consumption of this has increased,

we have no means of knowing with any approach to accuracy. According to the calculation of Lord Hawkesbury, the consumption of wheat in the kingdom in 1796 was 6,000,000 quarters: it is now estimated by the most careful authorities (but of course, as we have no agricultural statistics, this is merely an estimate) at 15,200,000 quarters. The growth of wheat in England is known to have enormously increased; and besides this, the amount of wheat and wheat-flour imported and retained for home consumption, which was 2,317,480 quarters in the five years ending with 1800, had increased in the five years ending with 1850 to 15,463,530 quarters. Vast as has been our importation since, it has all gone into consumption as fast as it was landed. Of course, the difference between our population at the several periods is to be taken into account. But, all things considered, probably the price of grain may be the best proximate test of the command of the working classes over this the first necessary of life. Now, a comparison of the past and present gives us a conclusive result; and it is a fair comparison, because the potato-disease and the famine of 1847 form an ample set-off against the bad harvests at the beginning of the century. The average price of wheat during the first ten years of the century was 83s. 6d.; during the last ten years it was only 53s. 4d. The same earnings therefore which in the last generation could command only five quartern loaves would now purchase eight. The fall in the cost of other articles

of daily consumption among the poor has been nearly, if not quite, as great. Coffee, which fifty years ago was selling at 200s. a cwt., may now be purchased, of equal quality, at 117s.; tea, in the same period, has fallen from 5s. to 3s. 4d. a lb.; and sugar from 80s. to 41s. a cwt. In articles of clothing the reduction is even more remarkable: a piece of printing calico, 29 yards long, which is made into three gowns, and which as late even as 1814, cost 28s. in the wholesale warehouse, is now sold for 6s. 6d., and two years ago sold as low as 5s. A piece of good 4-quarter Irish linen (13^{00} quality) bleached, sold in 1800 at 3s. 2d. a yard. Goods, the nearest to the same kind now made, sell at 14d. Grey 4-quarter shirting (20^{00} quality), which cost 5s. 6d. a yard in 1800, and 3s. 6d. in 1830, now sells for 1s. 6d.; and the cost of bleaching it is reduced in the same proportion, viz., from 12s. a piece in 1800 and 8s. in 1830, to 3s. 6d. in the present year.

These facts prove that the poor have the power of purchasing a larger quantity of food and clothing than formerly with the same sum. But we can go a step further than this, and can show, in the case of many articles, that they actually *do* supply themselves more liberally than formerly. We have seen that they do so with wheat. The average consumption of coffee (in spite of the great adulteration with chicory) has risen from one ounce and a tenth per head in 1801 to 28 ounces in 1849; tea from 19 oz. to 23 oz.; sugar from 15 lbs., which it was in 1822, to 24 lbs. in 1849, against 22½ lbs. in 1801.

Now it needs no elaborate argument to show, that increased cheapness of the principal necessaries of life must redound to the essential benefit of the poorest and most numerous section of the community. Of such articles as bread, sugar, coffee, calico, and linen, the wealthy and easy classes will always allow themselves as much as they desire or need; and a reduction in price will seldom induce them, as individuals (apart, that is, from their servants and household), to increase their consumption. It allows them, indeed, a larger surplus to spend on luxuries or elegancies: but that is the sum of its benefit to them; to the poor it makes all the difference of a scanty or an ample meal, of warm or insufficient clothing, of an anxious or a care-free mind, of a vigorous and healthy or a pining and sickly family. Mr Johnston, indeed, seems disposed to deny these conclusions, and has made a curious discovery. "If the labourer," says he (vol. i. p. 136), "were more a consumer than a producer, this cheapening of the produce of labour would be a prudent policy; but as the labourer is more a producer than a consumer, the policy is manifestly inimical to his interests."

As this is a fallacy which, though not often so clearly expressed, is at the root of many of the notions and feelings of conservatives and protectionists, it may be worth while to spend a few sentences upon it, though it has been already frequently exposed. In what way is the labourer—in what way can he be—more a producer than a consumer? Is he not a consumer *par excellence?* Is

not a larger proportion of his total income expended in articles of consumption than is the case with any other class? The middle class man purchases out of his earnings books for his library, ornaments for his chimney-piece, railway certificates for the investment of his savings. A nobleman spends half his income in foreign tours, in costly pictures, in vast conservatories, in strange exotics. The poor man spends *all* his income in food, in clothing, or in rent. How should he not be more benefited than any other, when these are cheap and plentiful? "Because," says Mr Johnston, "he is himself the producer of them." Here lies the fallacy. In what sense, producer? When a poor man is working on his own account and not for wages, he is owner of the article which he produces, and it is in his character of owner, and not as the instrument of production, that he has a direct interest in its price. Suppose him to be a maker of calico, and that calico and all other articles fall equally. He makes and *sells* calico; but he *purchases* hats, shoes, bread, bacon, sugar, and tea. He exchanges a piece of cheap calico against cheap hats, cheap bread, cheap sugar; instead of exchanging a piece of dear calico against dear hats, dear bread, dear sugar: this is the most favourable statement of the case for Mr Johnston's theory. Yet, even on this statement, cheapness could be no "imprudent policy" for the poor man, since, in both cases, he exchanges what have been *his whole earnings for his whole expenditure;* and a man who does this can never be more a

producer than a consumer. But take the case of a poor man working for wages. The only way in which the cheapness of the article he produces can be a disadvantage to him, is in the degree to which his wages are affected by it. We will not stop to inquire at present, whether the employer of manufacturing labour or of agricultural is most likely, under a general fall of prices, to be able to meet the fall in the article which he produces without a reduction in the money wages of his labour. The question before us, on a comparison of prices and wages, is one of fact. Have the wages of the labourer fallen, *pari passu*, with the price of the article at which he labours or of the main articles of his consumption? Now, will any one pretend to say that this has been the case? Have the wages of the agricultural peasant fallen in the proportion of 83 to 53? Have the wages of the calico weaver fallen in the proportion of 28 to 6? Have the wages of either of them fallen in the proportion of tea, coffee, or sugar. Is there any ground for believing that their wages have fallen at all? Let us inquire a little into this.

We admit at once that this is a point on which we cannot speak with the authoritativeness of distinct and positive knowledge: neither can our opponents. We have our strong convictions as they may have theirs; but neither we nor they have any documents by which we can force others to adopt them. The inquiry into the relative earnings of different trades and occupations in this and the last generation is one of singular difficulty, and one respecting the results of

which those who have taken the most pains with it will speak with the most diffidence. We have examined all the information which Mr M'Culloch and Mr Porter have been able to collect, and all which we ourselves have been able, from various sources, to bring to bear upon the question; and we avow ourselves quite unprepared to speak dogmatically. The following we believe to be the truth:—The wages of agricultural labour have fluctuated greatly at different times, and even now vary immensely in different counties, and for different qualifications; but we question whether any general change has taken place either for better or worse. There is no rule respecting them. There are districts where the earnings are only 7s. a week; there are others where they are 12s.; some where they are 15s.; and we have heard of cases where a first-rate ploughman or thrasher received 20s., and where the farmer said it answered to him to pay this. There are certain occupations in which wages have fallen from special causes,—as that of the hand-loom weavers, where ignorance, want of enterprise, and love of domestic occupation have combined to induce them to continue a hopeless competition against improved machinery;—as that of the tailors, deranged in some degree, some years since, by the consequences of foolish and unwarrantable strikes, but affected seriously, we believe, only in the case of show shops and the like;—as that of bad needlework, where the ease and collateral advantages of the employment have tempted into it excessive numbers. With these exceptions, we

believe that the wages of labour—*i.e.*, the amount earnable in a given number of hours—have rather risen than fallen during the last fifty years. So much for our belief,—which, perhaps, may be worth no more than the belief of others. The following, however, are facts; and comprise, we believe, all the actual information extant, and to be relied on. Mr Porter has ascertained from the Tables kept at Greenwich Hospital, that the wages of *carpenters* had risen from 18s. a week in 1800, to 29s. 3d. in 1836; —of *bricklayers*, from 18s. to 26s. 9d.;—of *plumbers*, from 19s. to 30s. In the same period the earnings of *London compositors* in the book trade had risen from 33s. to 36s.: we have ascertained that they remain the same. The earnings of compositors employed on the morning Papers had risen from 40s. to 48s. a week; they are now at the latter amount. From evidence published by a Committee of the House of Commons in 1833, added to such information as we have been able to obtain up to the present period, we give, as fully reliable, the following table of the earnings of a spinner of cotton yarn, No. 200 —at these several dates.

		Weekly net Earning.	Pounds of Flour these would purchase.	Pounds of Flesh Meat these would purchase.	Hours of Work.
		s. d.			
In the year	1804	32 6	117	62	74
„	1833	42 9	267	85	69
„	1850	40 0	320	85	60

In this case we see that in a trade more exposed than almost any other to severity of competition, a gradual rise of wages has been accompanied by a gradual reduction in the hours of labour, and a gradual, but decided, fall in the price of food. These, we believe, comprise all the facts known and to be trusted; and assuredly they fully make good our in position.

Mr Johnston returns to the charge (vol. i. p. 136) thus:—"The working classes have allowed themselves to be made the instrument of the middle orders or men of business, and have been led away by the delusion of accomplishing political changes, from which practically *they* could derive no advantage."—Is this true? Have they derived no advantage from the political changes which have taken place during the last twenty years? Has parliamentary reform led to the remission of no taxation which pressed heavily upon them? Has commercial reform, rendered possible only by the great Act of 1832, brought no addition to their comforts, no plenty to their hearths, no spring to their industry, no demand for their productions? In what state would they have been, if our exports in 1850 had been the same as our exports in 1840? Has municipal reform relieved them from no burdens and no injustice? Have the county courts afforded them no facility for the recovery of their small debts? Has the increasing attention now paid to those sanatory arrangements which peculiarly concern the poor, no connection with the augmentation of the popular element in our

government consequent upon parliamentary reform? Is the vast improvement which has taken place in the schools for the working classes in no degree traceable to the same influence? Has not, in fact, the whole of our legislation for the last fifteen years been marked above all other characteristics by attention to the wants, interests, and comforts of the poor? Let Mr Johnston look at our fiscal legislation alone, and blush for the injustice of his charge.

It is scarcely too much to say, that since 1830 the chief occupation of the Chancellor of the Exchequer has been the removal or reduction of taxes which pressed upon the mass of the people. We know how distasteful figures generally are both to hearers and readers, and we shall therefore be merciful in our use of them; but we have collected a few which are too speaking to be withheld. Since the peace in 1815 (leaving out that year), we have repealed, up to 1846, taxes which produced annually £53,046,000; and we have imposed taxes to the amount of £13,496,000; leaving a clear balance of relief to the country of £39,550,000 a year. From 1830 to 1850, £21,568,000 of taxes have been repealed, and £7,925,000 imposed, showing a relief to the country since that period of not less than £13,643,000. But these figures, though showing the extent to which the country has been eased, give a very inadequate conception of the extent to which the working classes have participated in that belief. Of the £7,925,000 of taxation imposed since 1830, £5,100,000 is

furnished by the income-tax, from which they are wholly exempted. In 1830, there were taxes on all the raw materials of our industry; *now*, all these come in free. In 1830, there was a prohibitory duty on foreign grain, foreign meat was excluded, and heavy customs' duties were levied on all imported articles of food. *Now* corn comes in free; butchers'-meat comes in free; the duty on colonial coffee has been reduced from 9d. and 6d. per lb. to 4d.; the duty on foreign sugar was prohibitory, it is now 15s. 6d. a cwt.; the duty on colonial sugar was 24s. a cwt., it is now 11s. In 1830, the poor man's letter cost him from 6d. to 13½d., he now gets it from the furthest extremity of the island for a penny. In fact, with the single exception of soap, *no tax is now levied on any one of the necessaries of life;* and if a working man chooses to confine himself to these, he may escape taxation altogether. Whatever he contributes to the revenue is a purely voluntary contribution. If he confines himself to a strictly wholesome and nutritious diet, and to an ample supply of neat and comfortable clothing,—if he is content, as so many of the best, and wisest, and strongest, and longest-lived men have been before him, to live on bread and meat and milk and butter, and to drink only water; to clothe himself in woollen, linen, and cotton; to forego the pleasant luxuries of sugar, coffee, and tea, and to eschew the noxious ones of wine, beer, spirits, and tobacco,—he may pass through life without ever paying one shilling of

taxation, except for the soap he requires for washing —an exception which is not likely to remain long upon our statute-book. Of what other country in the world can the same be said? The discontented, the factious, and the agitating still go about, telling the working man that he, the heavily-taxed Englishman, cannot compete with the lightly-taxed foreigner; speaking, as they might have been justified in some respects in speaking in 1800, or in 1815, or in 1829; using language which may have been true then, but which is simply false now. But in a work like Mr Johnston's, carefully prepared for the press, such unfairness and unveracity should, in common decency, have been avoided. In no country in Europe is the peasant and artisan so free from all enforced taxation as in England. The French peasant pays a salt-tax, *a contribution personelle et mobilière;* a licence-tax; and, if he live in a town, the vexatious and burdensome *octroi.* The German labouring man pays a poll-tax, a class-tax, a trade-tax, and sometimes a meat-tax; and in certain parts an *octroi* also. *The English working-man pays no direct taxes whatever.* He is taxed only for his luxuries; he pays only on the pleasures of the palate; if he chooses to dispense with luxuries, none of which are essential and few of which are harmless, he dispenses with taxation too; if, on the contrary, he chooses to smoke his pipe and drink his glass, to sip tea from China, and sweeten it with sugar from Jamaica, he at once puts himself into the category of the rich, who can afford these

superfluities; *he voluntarily steps into the tax-paying class*, and forfeits all title to sue or to complain *in formâ pauperis*. We are far from wishing to intimate that he should not indulge in all harmless luxuries to the utmost limit that he can afford; but most indisputably, in thus leaving it optional with him whether he will contribute to the revenue or not —and subjecting him to no actual privations if he decline to do so—Parliament is favouring him to an extent which it vouchsafes to no other class in the community, and to which no other land affords a parallel. His earnings are decimated by no income-tax, like those of the clerk; his cottage is subject to no window-tax, like that of the struggling professional aspirant; very generally he does not even contribute to the poor-rate;—he pays, like the rich man, to the State only when he chooses to imitate the rich man in his living.

In a very valuable paper, read by Mr Porter before the British Association in August 1851, on "The self-imposed Taxation of the Working Classes," he shows in a very striking manner how far less liberally they are treated by themselves than by the government which their advocates so unfairly accuse of neglect and injustice. He there clearly proves that the working classes tax themselves every year, in three needless and noxious articles alone, to an extent equal to the whole yearly revenue of the kingdom; these articles, too (which is the worst and most selfish feature of the case), being consumed almost entirely by the heads of

families, to the exclusion of their wives and children. Mr Porter, after a careful calculation, in which all exaggeration is anxiously eliminated, gives us the yearly expenditure of the people in the items of British and Colonial spirits, beer and porter, tobacco and snuff; leaving out brandy, as mainly used by the rich; leaving out all beer brewed in private families; leaving out English-made cigars, and all foreign manufactured tobacco, which is chiefly the higher priced snuff and Havannah cigars, not used by the poor. The sum total is as follows:—

Rum, gin, and whisky	£20,810,208
Beer and porter	25,383,165
Tobacco and snuff	7,218,242
	£53,411,615

Let those who speak of working men as an oppressed, impoverished, and extortionised class, reflect what a magical change in their condition a very few years would effect were this vast sum, thus worse than thrown away, either expended in adding to their comforts, or laid by to raise them into a class of capitalists, whom they so much envy and thoughtlessly malign.

"Vast as has been the increase of the national wealth of late years, its distribution has been far less satisfactory." So avers Mr Johnston. "Property is more and more coagulating into larger masses. The rich are becoming richer, and the poor poorer. No class of politicians denies this."—We deny it *in toto*: there is no evidence to support the assertion; and, thanks to Mr Porter's industry and research, there is

considerable evidence to disprove it. It is obvious that when the savings of the working classes—the sums they accumulate and lay by—are increasing, it cannot be said, with any truth, that the poor are becoming poorer. Now, we have no means of knowing, with any certainty, what the total amount of these savings are, because so large a portion of them are in the hands of friendly societies and Odd Fellows' clubs, of whose investments no summary is published. We only know that they are largely increasing. The number of these friendly societies registered was, in 1846, not less than 10,995; and the amount deposited by them in savings' banks, and directly in the hands of the National Debt Commissioners, was £3,301,560. In 1849, in spite of the severe pressure and high prices of 1847 and 1848, this sum had increased to £3,356,000. This, however, by no means comprises the whole.—Mr M'Culloch informs us that, in 1815, these societies were said to have numbered 925,429 members. If this be correct, they must now, he says, reach 1,200,000. But leaving these figures, over which some doubt may be thrown, let us come to the Savings' Banks, where we have official documents to rely on. In England, Wales, and Ireland, the depositors, who numbered 412,217 in 1830, had increased to 970,825 in 1848; and the amount deposited had sprung up from £13,507,568 to £27,034,026. The following will show the increase in the deposits as compared with the population, for England, Wales, and Ireland. In Scotland

owing to the greater facilities and the more liberal interest afforded by the ordinary banks, savings' banks have not till recently been much used.

			s.	d.	
In 1831 the amount deposited was			12	8	per head
1836	„	„	16	4	„
1841	„	„	19	10	„
1846	„	„	24	0	„

In 1848, the amount had fallen off to 20s. 11d., owing to the distress occasioned by the potato-rot, and the high price of provisions: it has since again increased.

It is, however, sometimes asserted that the bulk of depositors in these institutions do not belong, properly speaking, to the working classes, but are composed of domestic servants and small tradesmen. As regards friendly societies this assertion is certainly not true: as regards savings' banks we cannot speak so decidedly, since the callings of the depositors are not regularly classified and published. But we have lying before us a return from the Manchester and Salford Savings' Bank, in 1842—from which it appears that out of 14,937 depositors, 3,063 were domestic servants, 3,033 children, whose parents had invested money for them, only 2,372 tradesmen, clerks, warehousemen, porters, artists, and professional teachers, and the remainder were labourers and handicraftsmen in various branches of industry.

The official accounts of the dividends paid to fundholders afford much valuable information, strongly controverting the idea of the present tendency of pro-

perty to concentrate itself into few hands. They show that while the larger fund-holders are diminishing, the smaller are increasing. More persons hold to the half-yearly value of £5, fewer to the half-yearly value of £500.

Fundholders receiving at each Payment.		1831.	1848.	Increase per cent.	Diminution per cent.
	£				
Not exceeding	5	88,170	96,415	9·35	...
„	10	44,790	44,937	0·33	...
„	50	98,320	96,024	...	2·33
„	100	25,694	24,462	...	4·79
„	200	14,772	13,872	...	6·02
„	300	4,527	4,032	...	10·93
„	500	2,890	2,647	...	8·41
„	1000	1,398	1,222	...	12·59
„	2000	412	328	...	20·38
Exceeding	2000	172	177	2·90	...
		281,145	284,127		

The increase in the last item is caused by the insurance offices, which invest largely in the funds.

The income-tax returns lead to a similar conclusion: the smaller incomes have increased faster than the larger. While the number assessed between £150 and £500, have increased between 1812 and 1848, 196 per cent.; those assessed upwards of £500 have increased only 147 per cent. The probate duty lists give the same result. Between 1833 and 1848—

	Per cent.
The amount assessed on estates up to £1,500 had increased	15·56
„ „ between £1,500 and £5,000 „	9·21
„ „ „ £5,000 and £10,000 „	16·38
„ „ „ £10,000 and £15,000 „	6·36
„ „ of upwards of £15,000 „	7·20

While the amount of duty received on estates of £30,000 and upwards has been steadily though slowly decreasing.

Driven from all these lugubrious and malcontent positions, Mr Johnston takes refuge in the assertion that, in spite of wealth, in spite of civilisation, in spite of education, the moral condition of the people of England has retrograded in recent years. We will not now follow him through all the details he brings forward in proof of his statement. We will give one as a sample of the rest. He affirms, first (vol. ii. p. 247), as a matter which has fallen under his personal observation, that the greatest curse and source of crime and degradation among the labouring classes of England is drunkenness; and secondly, that this vice is on the increase, and "that from whatever cause, the consumption of ardent spirits has far from diminished." We admit his first assertion: we entirely deny the second. The decrease of habits of drinking among the middle and higher classes has long been matter of notoriety and of congratulation. Mr McCulloch states the average consumption of wine in the United Kingdom to have fallen since the close of the last century from *three* bottles a man to *one and one-third*, and from the last returns published we deduce the following figures:—

		Per Head.		
From 1795—1804	we consumed	0·52	gallons of	wine a year.
1821—1824	„	0·22	„	„
in 1842	„	0·18	„	„
in 1849	„	0·22	„	„

This is a most satisfactory result; but it is not generally known that the official documents relating to the consumption of beer and ardent spirits show one not less satisfactory with regard to the increasing temperance of the poor. For the first quarter of this century the high duties on British spirits caused such an enormous amount of illicit distillation that no comparison can be instituted with that period. Since 1830 the following table shows the annual consumption per head in the kingdom.

	1831.	1841.	1849.
British Spirits drunk per head	·90	·77	·84
Colonial	·15	·09	·11
Foreign	·05	·04	·08
	1·10	·90	1·03

The following table is still more clear and satisfactory, as showing that there has been a large and, on the whole, a continuous decrease in the use of ardent spirits in England and Ireland, and that the sole increase has been in Scotland.

Home made Spirits charged with Dtuy.	1831.	1836.	1843.	1846.	1849.
	Gallons.	Gallons.	Gallons.	Gallons.	Gallons.
England .	7,732,000	7,875,000	7,720,000	5,634,000	5,318,000
Scotland .	6,007,000	6,621,000	5,593,000	9,560,000	10,445,000
Ireland .	9,004,000	12,249,000	5,546,000	8,333,000	8,117,000
U Kingdom	22,743,000	26,745 000	18,859,000	23,527,000	23,880,000

The diminution in the consumption of malt liquor appears to have kept pace with that in the use of

spirits. In 1830 the beer duty was taken off, and a great increase in the number of licences was the result. The beer shops increased till 1838, when they reached their maximum. Since that time they have steadily declined. The licences granted in that year were 45,717, or one for every 566 persons; in 1849 they were 38,200, or one for every 720 persons.

Consumption per Head in the United Kingdom.	British Spirits. Gallons.	Bushels of Malt.
In the year 1831 .	·90	1·63
„ 1841 .	·77	1·35
„ 1839 .	·84	1·32

It will be allowed, we think, that these figures effectually dispose of Mr Johnston's rash assertion as to the increase in the consumption of intoxicating liquors among our increasing population.

We trust that the picture we have drawn of the undeniable improvement of our population as a whole, and of our progress in all the departments of national well-being, will not be held to indicate want of knowledge of the amount of social suffering which still exists, nor want of the deepest sympathy with the sufferers. We are fully cognisant of the existence in our great towns of a class of beings *below* the working classes, permanently and almost hopelessly degraded. We are not blind to the pressure, the privation, the penury, the occasional starvation, even, prevalent among many craftsmen, especially perhaps, among sempstresses and tailors. We admit and deplore the

depressed and impoverished condition of the agricultural labourers over many parts of England; and we look upon this feature in the social state of England with almost more anxiety than any other, because, more than any other, an air of wretchedness and of inability to rise would here appear to be characteristic of a whole section of our population. But we do not dwell upon these painful facts here, not from wishing to ignore them, nor from feeling them to be irreconcilable with our theory of progress, but because—unless they can be shown to spring out of our advancing civilisation, or to prevail now to a greater degree than formerly—they are, in our controversy with the asserters of our national decay, to a great extent irrelevant considerations. The existence of wide-spread distress is undoubtedly a proof that our civilisation is imperfect, and our social system incomplete; but that this distress is more extensive or more severe than it has been, will not, we think, be deliberately held by any one who is aware how similar complaints, as angry and unmeasured, stretch back through the whole half century; how much more sensitive to suffering, how much more quick to detect and prompt to pity misery, the public mind has of late years become; and how many phases of wretchedness formerly hidden in secrecy and silence are now made known through a thousand channels. If there are among us any class whose inability to live in comfort or to rise out of their bondage is justly chargeable upon the arrangements of society,

this is an impeachment of our civilisation, and a fatal flaw in the structure of our political community. But if, as we believe, all these cases of misery and degradation—where they are not those casual exceptions which must always exist in human, and therefore imperfect, societies—are distinctly traceable to the former neglect of natural laws which are now beginning to be studied and obeyed, and to a violation, by the last generation, of principles which have been taken as the guide and the pole-star of the present,—then this impeachment can no longer be justly sustained. It is the law of nature that children should suffer for their father's faults: it is the law of nature that indolence, improvidence, recklessness, and folly should entail suffering and degradation; and it is no just ground for the condemnation of our social arrangements that they carry out this law; nor any argument against the progress of an age that the action of this law is legibly written on its face. If, indeed (in any but exceptional instances, which no system can ever meet), the industrious, the frugal, and the foreseeing — whose parents before them were industrious, frugal, and foreseeing also—not only cannot maintain their position or rise above it, but are sinking lower and lower in spite of their exertions, then the construction of society is somehow, somewhere, in fault, and our boasted progress is a mistake and mockery. But who will affirm such cases to exist except as rare anomalies?

One remark more, and we will quit this branch of

the subject. Much has been written of late respecting the privations of the 30,000 needlewomen and the 23,000 tailors of the metropolis, and of the destitution and squalor of the peasants in rural districts: shocking individual pictures have been drawn of the sufferings of these classes; and, exaggerated as some of them may have been in tone and colouring, we do not deny their truth in the main. They are true as scenes; are they true as general delineations? Are they *specimens*, or *exceptions?* How deep do these miseries go? Are they characteristic of a class, or only of individuals of that class? There is, moreover, one weighty consideration entirely left out of view by those who draw rapid generalisations from these harrowing descriptions, which we can only just indicate here. *How small a redundance of numbers in any branch of industry will suffice to give to that branch the appearance, and even, for the time, to cause the reality, of general distress?* If, in the cotton trade, there is regular employment, at ample wages, for 50,000 spinners, and 50,500 are seeking for work, though it be only this extra *one per cent.* who are, properly speaking, destitute or in distress, they may easily succeed not only in actually making the other ninty-nine sharers in their privations, but in giving a general character of destitution and *unemployedness* to the whole class. If there are 31,000 needlewomen in London, and only 30,000 are wanted, the surplus thousand, by their competition, their complaints, their undeniable destitution, will inevitably produce on the superficial observer the impression of starvation and

inadequate employment pervading the whole denomination. Apply these remarks to the clothing trades. Now, if we are right in this, with what justice can sufferings of this character be urged to show that society is retrograding or out of joint? How can privations, however sad, however clamorous for cure, resulting from the surplus of a few thousands—*and properly belonging only to those few*—be adduced in disproof of the progress and increasing comfort of a population of 20,000,000?

The excessive toil required in nearly every occupation—the severity of the struggle for existence—the strain upon the powers of every man who runs the race of life in this land and age of high excitement,—Mr Johnston regards as a great counter-indication to the idea of progress. Unquestionably it is a great drawback, and a sore evil. But it is by no means confined to the lower orders. Throughout the whole community we are all called to labour too early and compelled to labour too severely and too long. We live sadly too fast. Our existence, in nearly all ranks, is a crush, a struggle, and a strife. Immensely as the field of lucrative employment has been enlarged, it is still too limited for the numbers that crowd into it. The evil is not peculiar to the peasant or the handicraftsman—perhaps even it is not most severely felt by him. The lawyer, the statesman, the student, the artist, the merchant, all groan under the pressure. All who work at all are overworked. Some have

more to do than they can do without sacrificing the enjoyments, the amenities, and all the higher objects of existence; others can scarcely find work enough to enable them to keep body and soul together. No one can be more keenly alive than we are to all that is regretable in such a state of things. But we doubt whether the mischief is increasing: we know that many efforts are making to diminish it: that some progress has already been achieved in this direction; and that while the evil is felt and admitted, we are also beginning to perceive in what quarter its eradication must be sought. Shorter hours of labour have already been enforced in factories; among tradesmen, and shopmen, and milliners there is a popular movement supported by an organisation of considerable extent, called "The Short-time Movement;" and in the legal, and we believe in the medical profession likewise, employment is more diffused and less monopolised by a few than was the case a few years ago. The Committee of the House of Commons which sat last session to inquire into official salaries, elicited some valuable information on this subject from the then Attorney-General, and other leading counsel, to the effect that owing to the establishment of County Courts and other legal arrangements, many more barristers are employed now than formerly; and that while there are fewer colossal fortunes made at the bar, there are a greater number of lawyers in the receipt of moderate professional incomes.

Further progress in the cure of this pervading

malady must be sought in the diffusion of simpler habits and more moderate and rational desires; in sounder views of the objects of life, and a juster estimate of the elements of true enjoyment; in the stronger development of individual volition, and in a growing emancipation from senseless and tyrannical conventionalities. To enable us all to work less intently and less incessantly, it is only necessary that we should be content to live more humbly and be satisfied with less; we must all alike purchase leisure by frugality, and by contentment with a lowlier and less ambitious lot than we have hitherto striven after. This is the only coin by which the pearl of great price can be bought. The labourer who aspires after continental ease must be satisfied with the privations and parsimony of continental living; the merchant must be content to purchase the delights of domestic society and unanxious nights at the price of dying fifty thousand pounds poorer than he once expected; the physician or the lawyer, if he cannot easily refuse the practice which flows in upon him in such overwhelming abundance, can at least, by limiting his desires to the accumulation of a more modest fortune, retire earlier from the struggle, and devolve his business upon his less successful brethren. If we could all be suddenly endowed with wisdom to perceive how few of the worthier objects of earthly existence require wealth for their attainment,—how truly all the real happiness, even of refined and intellectual life, is within the reach of an easily-acquired competence,—how seldom the rich are

free, even in the expenditure of their riches;—how generally—how almost universally—the affluent are compelled to lay out their envied wealth, not in adding one iota to their own enjoyment, but in obedience to the tyrannical dictation of the world in which they live,[1] —we should discover that the excessive toil and the severe struggle of life which we all unite to deprecate and deplore, is, in truth, a self-imposed necessity,—like the taxation of the poor. If the English people could all at once be induced to lay aside their luxurious, wasteful, and showy mode of life, and adopt the frugality and temperance of the Spaniards, the simple habits of the Tyrolese, and the unostentatious hospitality of the Syrians, how few among us would not find a superfluity at their disposal!

We rejoice to believe that this more rational and homely spirit is spreading among us, especially in detached localities; and we do not think that a good citizen could render any more valuable service to his country than in promoting it, by argument and example, wherever his influence extends.

It is, however, incumbent upon those who, by a shorter process than that of national enlightenment, would bring about less strenuous exertion and shorter hours of labour in all industrial occupations, to consider what the attainment of their purpose signifies and would involve. Less labour signifies less pro-

[1] The late Lord Dudley used to observe that, "the only real competence was to have £10,000 a year, and for the world to believe that you had only £5000. You would then have £5000 *for yourself.*"

duce: shorter hours of work mean a diminution in the quantity of all those articles of necessity and comfort which work creates. The Provisional Government of France, after the last Revolution, issued a degree reducing the hours of daily labour by one-third; but they soon found, by actual results, what a fatal and shallow blunder they had made, looking to the object they had in view. If the peasant works eight hours instead of ten, he has so many fewer quarters of wheat to exchange with the artisan; if the weaver works eight hours instead of ten, he has so many fewer shirts or coats to exchange against the bread of the agricultural labourer; there is less food and less clothing for the community at large; all articles rise in price, and therefore none of the producers benefit by the advance, while society, as a whole, is worse provided for than before. We are far from saying that the leisure thus purchased may not be well worth its cost; but we must not imagine that it can be had for nothing, or that it can be obtained at any cheaper rate. It is only by being, as a nation, contented with less, that we can safely venture to take measures for producing less. If we diminish labour, we must put up with diminished supplies; unless, indeed, we can employ our labour on more fertile and productive fields.

Yes!—say the votaries of "organisation,"—there is a third alternative. In general we work too much—but there are many among us who do not work at all: set the idle to work. Alas! this expedient would go but a small way towards meeting the difficulty. How

many unemployed are there in Great Britain? and what proportion do they bear to the total population, the great mass of whom are alleged to be overworked? —Among the middle classes there are some, among the higher there are many, who do nothing. But how infinitesimal a proportion do these form of 20,000,000? In the manufacturing districts we hear of a few unemployed artisans; and in the metropolis the complaint is of the multitude of the overworked, not of the idle. In the agricultural districts even, the number of able-bodied unemployed is small and diminishing. The number of adults so described was, on January 1, 1849, 201,644; in 1850, 170,502; in 1851, 154,525. It is pretty certain that if all the unemployed in all ranks were set to work, they would not relieve the overworked to the extent of half an hour a day. If, indeed, as some have suggested, all who are occupied in supplying the ornaments and luxuries of life were to be employed in producing necessaries, the result might be very different; but this would have serious evils of its own; and be of use only as far as it should bring us back to the remedy we have shown to be the true one,—simpler and more frugal habits diffused through the community.

Mr Johnston devotes a careful chapter to the examination of the Criminal Returns for the last fifteen years; and seems strongly disposed to draw from them an augury favourable to his notions of the deterioration of our social state. Except, however, in the single and very painful instance of the increase of

murders, which cannot be gainsaid, we do not see that his statistics bear out his impressions. A comparison of the total commitments for various classes of offences during the last fifteen years, gives the following results.

Nature of Offences.	Five Years ending 1839.	Five Years ending 1844.	Five Years ending 1849.	Increase per Cent. between First and Last Period.
Murder . . .	315	347	365	15·8
Attempts to murder and manslaughter .	1,763	2,210	2,153	22·1
Total offences against the person . .	9,559	10,885	10,318	8·
Violent and malicious offences against property . . .	7,666	11,340	8,958	16·8
Simple ditto . .	90,172	113,047	111,804	24·
Total of all commitments	112,864	142,389	136,408	20·8
Yearly average . .	22,573	28,478	27,282	20·8

Now, notwithstanding the marked *decrease* in all offences except murder between 1844 and 1849; notwithstanding, also, the consideration that, against an increase between the first and last periods here given for comparison (an increase varying from eight to twenty-four per cent.), there has to be set an increase of population amounting to fourteen per cent.; still we are quite ready to confess, that, at first sight, the result presented is the reverse of satisfactory. But there are two or three considerations which, when duly weighed, will do much to mitigate our disappointment. And, first, let us inquire into the

relative heinousness of the offences committed in these three periods, as indicated by the severity of the sentences passed upon them by the judges. Many crimes necessarily classed together under the same general denomination may be marked by very different degrees of guilt; and, where no material change has taken place in our penal laws, between the periods to be compared, we do not know that any fairer estimate can be obtained of the relative enormity of crimes than that afforded by the view taken of them by those who were judicially cognisant of all the circumstances attending their commission.

Sentences.	Five Years ending 1839.	Five Years ending 1844.	Five Years ending 1849.	Increase per Cent. since 1832.	Decrease per Cent. since 1839.
Death . .	1,627	368	282	...	82
Transportation for more than 15 years . .	2,646	1,162	493	...	81
Tr. from 7 to 15	5,087	9,766	6,173	21	...
Tr. for 7 years .	10,864	15,110	12,668	17	...
Imprisonment above 2 years .	72	76	15	...	80
Im. above 1 year	1,775	2,395	2,208	24	...
Im. 1 year and under . .	56,341	77,501	81,979	45	...

Thus it appears that while the offences judged worthy of death and transportation for life have diminished since 1839, 81 per cent.; and those judged worthy of shorter terms of exile have increased somewhat faster than the population, the vast increase which has taken place has been in those

offences punishable by a year's imprisonment, or even less. A comparison between the last five years and the five years immediately preceding, shows a diminution in all offences except those visited with the mildest penalties.

There are, however, other circumstances which render the increase or diminution of committals for crime a very inadequate and often deceptive criterion of the moral progress of the community. In the first place, the varying skill and activity of the police will go far to modify any conclusions we might draw from criminal returns. An increase in the number of committals is often only an indication of a better system of detection. The number of offenders brought to justice is often no more complete or accurate test of the number of offences committed, than is the number of fish caught of the number swimming in the river. If every year a larger proportion of existing criminals be not brought to light, our police cannot be improving as it ought. It is, therefore, obvious that an increase in the crimes made known may easily co-exist with an actual decrease in the crimes committed. In the second place—and this is a point to which we wish to call special attention—*crime is, for the most part, committed not by the community at large, but by a peculiar and distinct section of it.* A great portion of the crimes of violence, and most of the crimes of fraud, are due to *professional* criminals; and an increase of offences indicates rather increased activity in this criminal population, or increased facility

for their depredations, or, at most, an increase in their numbers, than any augmented criminality on the part of society in general. The inmates of our gaols, the culprits in our docks, belong habitually, in an overwhelming proportion, to a *class apart*, a class whose occupation and livelihood are found in the commission of offences; who are compelled to this trade because they know no other, and because no other is in vogue among the people with whom their lot is cast; and who are in many cases trained to it as regularly as others are trained to weaving, to ploughing, or to tailoring. The increase of crime, therefore, generally bespeaks, on the worst supposition, an increase of the criminal population; and in no degree militates against the idea of the progress of morality and civilisation among all other classes, though it shows, with painful distinctness and with startling emphasis, that society has not succeeded in removing the motives which stimulate to a criminal career, or in redeeming and absorbing those classes from which the criminal population is recruited. While it is one of the beneficial effects of a good police, to separate more and more the light from the darkness, our swollen return of crime is undoubtedly a blot upon our escutcheon and a drawback on our progress; not as impeaching the general honesty and virtue of the nation, but as showing the existence of a class among us which the advance of civilisation ought to have eradicated or suppressed.

These reflections may suggest an explanation of the mistake both of those who, finding the great majority

of criminals to be uneducated, conceive that their criminality is due to their ignorance, and will be removed by their instruction; and of those also, who, finding no regular and steady ratio (or only an inverse one) between the spread of education and the decrease of crime, infer that instruction is not an efficient ally of morality or a natural antagonist to crime. The criminality of the inmates of our gaols and convict ships, though found in almost invariable concomitance with ignorance, does not spring from it; but the concomitance is to be explained by the reflection that absence of all proper training and instruction is only one of the many characteristics of the class in which habitual and professional criminals are found. No education will eradicate their criminality unless it should raise them out of the class from which they have sprung, or otherwise alter the surrounding circumstances which hem them in, and point their course with an imperious and overpowering hand. Also, under these circumstances, it is evident that no national education, however improved in its quality, or excellent in its direct results, can be reasonably expected to produce any decisive effect upon our criminal returns, as long as it stops short of our professional criminal population. Crime cannot be diminished by any moral influence bearing only upon the non-criminal classes.

Another count of Mr Johnston's indictment against the present age is the want of cordial and kindly intercourse between different ranks :—

"The separation between rich and poor—the dissympathy and isolation of classes,—is the great social evil of the time. Institutions for scientific and literary teaching by lectures, at the cheapest possible rates, are established; parks for the recreation of the lower orders are planted; even clubs, upon something like the aristocratic model, where conveniences and luxuries are supplied at low prices: but all this seems to be unsuccessful. What one wants to see—a mutual and hearty recognition of the differences of condition, a kind and cordial condescension on the one side, and an equally cordial, but still respectful, devotedness, on the other—appears to make no progress."—Vol. i. p. 131.

This is a common and natural, but we think an inconsiderate complaint. It is "a longing, lingering look behind," cast after the characteristics of an era that has passed away. It is the hankering which pervades the Young-England party. It is the secret regret indulged in by the more amiable portion of our aristocracy. The truth is, that that kind of friendly intercourse between the higher and lower orders—seductive as we feel it to be in description—beautiful and touching as it often was in reality—belonged to feudalism, and is simply impracticable and incongruous in a democratic age. It arose from and depended upon a relative position of the two classes which no longer exists. It could not be ingrafted on their present relations. The theory of generous protection on the one side, and grateful and affectionate dependence on the other, can no longer form the basis on which the social hierarchy rests. If still cherished among the aristocratic rich, it is repudiated by the labouring poor; and if the former were to attempt to act it out, they would be met by ridicule, repulsion, and rebellion, from the latter. To explain fully the nature of the

change in the relations of the two parties, and the precise point in the change which English society has now reached, would require us to copy whole pages from Mill's philosophic chapter on "The Probable Future of the Working Classes," and from the fourth volume of Tocqueville's "Democracy in America." The error of those who thus seek to recall the attachments and sympathies of feudalism "lies in not perceiving that these virtues and sentiments, like the clanship and hospitality of the wandering Arab, belong emphatically to a rude and imperfect state of the social union. We have entered into a state of civilisation in which the bond that attaches human beings to one another must be disinterested admiration and sympathy for personal qualities, or gratitude for unselfish services —not the emotions of protectors towards dependents, or of dependents towards protectors. Of the working classes of Western Europe, at least, it may be pronounced certain that the patriarchal or paternal system of government is one to which they will not again be subject. They have taken their interests into their own hands"[1]

The unsatisfactory nature of the intercourse now subsisting between rich and poor arises mainly from the fact of the relations between them being in a state of transition; neither of the two parties having altogether discarded the old ideas, nor wholly embraced and comprehended the new. Both are still somewhat under the influence of feudal associations; and con-

[1] Mill's Political Economy, vol. ii. p. 317.

found in their minds the rights and duties of the past relation with those of the relation which has superseded it. The bond between the two classes, and their mutual obligations, are as clear and imperative as ever; but these obligations have changed their character, and require to be defined anew. Till they are so defined and thoroughly realised by both, the intercourse between the classes can never resume a perfectly simple and satisfactory footing. At present, circumstances and recollections combine to make it impossible to mix either on the old footing of feudalism, or on the new footing of equality. The great repudiate the one; the lower orders repudiate the other. There are three relations in which capital and labour, the rich and the poor, the noble and the peasant, may stand to each other. There is the relation of slavery, the relation of vassalage, the relation of simple contract. In the first there is absolute dependence and absolute control; in the second there is a modified submission and partial protection and command; in the third there is theoretic equality, and simple service is balanced against simple payment. In Egypt and in Carolina, the first of these relations subsists; in Russia and Hungary the second; in France and Pennsylvania the third;—and in none of these countries is there any misunderstanding or confusion on the subject. In England, on the contrary, we are stepping from the second to the third of these relations, but have not quite realised or got accustomed to the change. Neither the higher nor the lower classes see clearly, or feel invariably, in which of the two relative positions

they stand, or wish to stand. Each party borrows some of the *claims* of the former relation, but forgets the correlative *obligations*. The peasant and the artisan conceive that they are entitled to claim from their master the forbearance, the kindness, the protection in danger, the assistance in difficulty, the maintenance in distress and destitution, which belong to the feudal relation; but they forget to pay the corresponding duties of consideration, confidence, and respect. On the other hand, the master is too apt to forget that his servants, and the nobleman that his tenants, are now, in the eye not only of the law but of society, his equal fellow-citizens; and he is still sometimes seen exacting from them, not only the stipulated work and rent, but that deference, devotion, and implicit obedience to which only virtue, justice, and beneficence on his part at present can entitle him.

Now we are not disposed to regret that the relative position of the classes has been thus changed: the matter for regret is that the change is not fully felt or comprehended, and that it has come upon us before both parties were perfectly prepared to meet it. In the new relation properly regarded and conscientiously adopted with all its corollaries, there may be, if less that is picturesque and poetical, more that is elevating, than in the old. We confess that, in spite of the seductions of fancy, we have no hankering after the past paradise of serfdom. We believe that the reciprocal dependence and fostering of feudalism have been replaced by something better, worthier, and more hopeful. There is no longer the same fre-

quent and devoted attachment on the part of individuals among the rich to individuals among the poor (and *vice versâ*). But there is, what was unknown in feudal times, regard, care, and compassion for the poor as a class: sympathy for them and a sense of duty to them, as being an integral, acknowledged, vital portion of the community. In the regretted days of aristocracy and vassalage, the servant revered and loved his lord, and the lord was kind to the dependents who belonged to him, and was in daily intercourse with them; but justice to the labouring *masses*, compassion to the aggregate poor, a desire to elevate and improve the condition of the people as a whole, were sentiments as yet unborn. Now, it is true, we see but seldom those attachments of superior and serf,—lasting, not only through a long lifetime, but through many generations—which so beautified and hallowed the social life of mediæval times. We do not so often witness the sports and feasts of peasants in the parks of our nobility, encouraged and presided over by the benevolent and condescending great. Instead, however, of all this we have signs of interest and regard more substantial, if less attractive; we have sanitary commissioners; we have factory and mine inspectors; we have organised education; we have official investigations into every reported abuse; and charitable associations for relieving or precluding every possible variety of wretchedness.

But feudalism has found a still more valuable substitute and successor. Self-reliance has replaced,

or is fast replacing, among our working classes, the enthralling, enfeebling habits of dependence on the protection and guidance of another, which was distinctive of past times. Among the agricultural peasantry the old feelings and the old habits may linger still; but among artisans and handicraftsmen of every denomination,—among the dwellers in the great hives of our industry which are replenished from the rural districts, and who must in time communicate their own spirit to the homes from which they spring,—a proud sense of self-dependence, a resolution to owe their well-being and advancement to themselves alone, a surly and contemptuous thrusting back of charitable aid or guidance from above, are rapidly spreading, and manifesting themselves sometimes in forms which we might resent and deplore, were not the substance which gives rise to them so beyond all price.

The duties which the higher ranks of society owe to those below them in the social hierarchy, are not obliterated or discharged by this change in their relative positions, which modern times and political reforms have brought about: but the nature of these duties is materially altered. To distressed individuals of every description and of all ranks we all owe tender compassion and charitable aid: while to the lower orders, as such, we owe not charity but justice, —not so much the open purse, as the equal measure. Advice, as far as they will receive it; guidance, as far as they will submit to it; control at times, as far

as the unbounded freedom of the English constitution will enable us to exercise it; education of the best quality and to the utmost extent that our unhappy sectarian jealousies will permit us to bestow it. We owe them fair play in everything; justice of the most even-handed sort, full, unquestionable, and overflowing; the removal of every external impediment which prevents them from doing and being whatever other classes can do and be. We owe it to them to employ our superior capacities, our richer opportunities, our maturer wisdom, in cheering their toil, smoothing their difficulties, directing their often misguided and suicidal energies. We owe to them every facility with which we can surround their conflict with the obstacles of life,—facility to obtain land, to obtain employment, or obtain colonisation; facility to acquire temperate habits, to accumulate savings, to employ them wisely, to invest them well: facility, above all, to acquire that which is at once the key and crown of all,—solid and comprehensive instruction in all the things which belong both to their earthly welfare and their future peace. Our duty to them *as a class*, may be comprised in a single sentence; we should enable them to *get* everything, but should *give* them nothing,—except education; and if we give this to one generation, the next may safely be trusted to get it for themselves. Compassion to the afflicted, encouragement to the struggling, aid to the feeble, succour to the destitute, —these man owes to man, independent of rank or

station, creed or colour, according to the measure of need on the one side and capacity on the other.

The chapter which is devoted to Sir Robert Peel is one of the most interesting in the book. Mr Johnston regards that eminent and lamented statesman from an opponent's point of view, but in no hostile spirit. He considers that to speak of him as "the embodiment and type of the age in which he lived, implies no compliment, if the age be (as he evidently conceives it) essentially unheroic—an age of compromise and artifice—an age more prolific of prudence than of elevated feeling—an age in which generous enthusiasm is dead." Again, he is inclined to account for the high and sincere encomiums passed upon Sir Robert Peel by leading men of all parties, "by a vitiated state of the general mind, so far as regards public affairs; by the want of heroic attachment to high principle, by the fact that we have at present upper classes at once disdainful and mean, and middle classes worshipping what is safest, or what seems so."

Now though we do not think that Mr Johnston is altogether just to the character of Sir Robert Peel, still it is not our province to undertake his defence at present, except in as far as the grounds on which he is condemned would ensure the condemnation of nearly all the statesmen of the age; and besides, would indicate a want of appreciation of their peculiar difficulties, and a misconception of the qualities of character and the course of conduct exacted from them by the nature of

representative governments and the circumstances of modern times.

It is a common complaint among the *laudatores temporis acti*,—and our author echoes it in more than one passage—that the race of great statesmen has died out,—that their modern representatives are dwarfed and dwindled, and that statesmanship itself has become low, time-serving, and mediocre. The sentiment is no new one: as the men of our days look upon Pitt, and Fox, and Burke, the men of their times looked back on Bolingbroke and Chatham; these in their turn on Halifax and Clarendon; and these again on Walsingham and Burleigh. But the truth is that the statesmen of one age or country are unsuited to the requirements of another; and it is from failing to bear this in mind that we are so generally unjust to the men of our own day, so needlessly desponding about our future, and so apt unduly to extol the great leaders of the past. Our age demands very different qualifications in its public men from those which made men eminent and serviceable in the time of our forefathers. The statesmen of an autocratic government, like Austria or Russia, would scarcely be more out of place in a constitutional government like ours, than the statesmen of Elizabeth, or Charles, or Anne would find themselves in the reign of Victoria. The magnificent powers of Sully and Richelieu, even of Stein and Hardenberg, would be misplaced in the latitude of London. Marlborough and Godolphin would be impeached for corruption; the domineering genius of

Lord Chatham would cause him to be shelved as an "impracticable" man, with whom it was impossible to act; the imperious temper of Hyde and Strafford would be much more promptly fatal to them in our days than they at last became even in their own; and even a Cecil or a Bacon could scarcely manage to govern with a reformed parliament as "viceroy over them." The very qualities which made men great in public life formerly, would bar them out from public life now. A vast change has taken place in the nature of the statesmanship required; and it is still in progress. The statesmanship required now is far less initiative and more administrative than formerly. A public man in the present day cannot decide upon his principles and purposes and carry them out by the mere force of the high position to which his sovereign may have raised him. He is debarred from the glorious power which belongs to the rulers of autocratic states, of deciding in his own mind on the measures suited to ensure his country's grandeur or well-being, and enacting and enforcing them, regardless of the opposition of parties less far-seeing, less profound, less patriotic than himself. He cannot place before him a great object, and say, "This my position as prime minister enables me to attain, and I will disregard present hostility and blame, and trust to future results to justify and vindicate my wisdom." He is denied that noblest privilege of the wise and mighty—that which gives to statesmanship its resistless fascination for the ripened mind—the right to elaborate, "in the

quietness of thought,"[1] a system of policy, solid in its foundations, impartial in its justice, far-reaching, fertilising, beneficent in its operation,—and to pursue it with unswerving and imperturbable resolve. He cannot, like Peter, systematise the civilisation of a barbarous empire; he cannot, like Richelieu, by the union of high office and indomitable will, subdue and paralyse a haughty and ancient aristocracy; he cannot, like Colbert, reconstruct the finances and commerce of a great kingdom; he cannot, like Stein, by an overpowering fiat, raise a whole nation of *prolétaires* out of serfdom into civil possessions and civil rights. He is powerless except in as far as he can induce others to agree with him. He has not only to conceive and mature wise schemes, he has to undergo the far more painful and vexatious labour of persuading others of their excellence, of instructing the ignorance of some, of convincing the understandings of others, of combating the honest prejudices of one party, of neutralising the interested opposition of another; he has to clip, to modify, to emasculate his measures, to enfeeble them by some vital omission in order to conciliate this antagonist, to clog them with some perilous burden in order to satisfy that rival, till he is fain to doubt whether compromise has not robbed victory of its profit as well as of its charms.

These are some of the difficulties which statesmen have to overcome in a country where parliament is omnipotent, and where every citizen is a dogmatic and self-complacent politician. Though modern statesman-

ship may call for other qualities than those needed in former days, the qualities are assuredly neither fewer, less lofty, nor less rare. A thorough mastery of facts, a clear purpose, a patient temper, a persevering will; a profound knowledge of men, of the motives which actuate them, of the influences by which they are to be swayed; skill to purchase the maximum of support by the minimum of concession; tact to discern the present temper and the probable direction of the popular feeling; sagacity to distinguish between the intelligent and the unintelligent public opinion, between the noisy clamour of the unimportant few, and the silent convictions of the influential many, between the outcry which may be safely and justly disregarded, and the expression of the mind of the country which it would be wrong and dangerous to withstand;—these are surely qualifications which demand no ordinary combination of moral and intellectual endowments. The statesman of to-day requires as comprehensive a vision and as profound a wisdom as in former times, with intenser labour, and a far wider range of knowledge; but he requires other gifts which formerly were scarcely needed. For, he now has not only to decide what ought to be done, and what is the wisest way of doing it, but he has to do it, or as much of it as he can, in the face of obstacles of which Machiavelli had no conception, which would have baffled Mazarin, and at which even Chatham or Walpole might have stood aghast. To quarrel with a statesman because he is what his age compels him to

be, because he meets the requirements of his day and generation, because he does not import into a democratic age, and into a country in which the popular element is unprecedentedly active and powerful, the habits and qualities of mind which could only find their fitting field and natural development in aristocratic or despotic eras, is simply to join issue with the political necessities of the times. In England, in the middle of the nineteenth century, with a reformed parliament, with a free and powerful press, with a population habituated throughout all its ranks to the discussion of political affairs, a minister, whatever be his genius, can no longer *impose his will* upon the nation; to be useful and great he must carry the nation along with him, he must be the representative and embodiment of its soberest and maturest wisdom, —not the depository or exponent, still less the imperious enforcer, of views beyond their sympathy, and above their comprehension. The nature of our government prescribes the qualifications of our statesmen; to hanker after a different order of men is to pine for a different order of things.

With these remarks we close our notice of Mr Johnston's work. It is a readable and well-written book, abounding with information of many kinds. Its faults are a want of purpose, too manifest a disposition to decry the present and exalt the past, and too blinding a habit of looking at most questions,—whether they concern things or persons,—from a party point of view.

To this last objection we may be peculiarly alive, the party views not being our own.

IV.

SIR R. PEEL'S CHARACTER AND POLICY.[1]

WITHIN one generation three statesmen have been suddenly called away in the zenith of their fame, and in the full maturity of their powers. All of them were followed to their graves by the sincerest sorrow of the nation; but the nature of the grief thus universally felt was modified in each case by the character of the individual, the position which he held, and the nature of the services which the country anticipated from him. When Sir Samuel Romilly fell beneath the overwhelming burden of a private calamity, the nation was appalled at the suddenness of the catastrophe, and mourned over the extinction of so bright a name. He had never held any very prominent public office, though the general estimation in which he was held designated him ultimately for the very highest. He had achieved little, because he was a reformer in a new path, and had to fight his way against the yet unshaken prejudices of generations, and the yet unbroken ranks of the veteran opponents of all change; but thoughtful men did honour to the wisdom and purity of his views, and there was steadily growing up among all classes of the community a profound conviction of his earnestness, sincerity, and superiority to

[1] *Westminster Review*, July 1852.

all selfish and party aims, and a deep and hearty reverence for the stern, grave, Roman-like virtue which distinguished him from nearly all his contemporaries. It was universally felt, that if he had lived he would have risen high and have done much; and that, whether he lived or died, the mere existence of so lofty and spotless a character reflected lustre on the country where he shone, and raised the standard by which public men were judged. It was felt that although England might not suffer greatly by the loss of his services, it would at least be the less bright and glorious for his departure; and hence he was mourned for with an unusually unselfish and single-minded grief.—The regret of the nation at Canning's untimely death was at once more bitter and more mixed. A brilliant "spirit was eclipsed;" the voice that had so long charmed us was henceforth to be silent; the intellect that had served the country so long and so gallantly could serve her no more. All this was sad enough, but there was something beyond this. There was the feeling that the curtain had fallen before the drama was played out, when its direction had just been indicated, but while the issue could as yet be only dimly guessed. There was a general impression that, with his acceptance of the Foreign Office in 1822, a new era and a noble line of policy had commenced for England, and that, with his accession to the premiership in 1827, the ultimate triumph of that policy was secured; that the flippancy and insolence which had made him so many enemies in early life, were

about to be atoned for by conscientious principle and eminent services;—that years and experience had matured his wisdom, while sobering his temper and strengthening his powers;—that the wit and genius which, while he was the ill-yoked colleague of Pitt, Sidmouth, and Castlereagh, had too often been employed to adorn narrowness, to hide incapacity, and to justify oppression, would now be consecrated to the cause of freedom and of progress;—and that the many errors of his inconsiderate youth would be nobly redeemed by the dignified labours of his ripened age. With one memorable and painful exception, his former antagonists were yearning to forgive the past, and to form the most sanguine visions for the future; and the dismay which his elevation spread among the tyrants abroad, was the measure of the joy with which it was hailed by the Liberals at home. When, therefore, he died, after only four months' tenure of his lofty station, the universal cry was, that the good cause had lost its best soldier and its brightest hope. Men could scarcely forbear from murmuring that so brief a sceptre had been granted to one who meant so well and could have done so much; and to all the friends of human progress, the announcement of his death was like thick darkness settling down upon their cherished anticipations. But another feeling mixed with those of sorrow and despondency —a feeling of bitter indignation. Right or wrong, it was believed that Canning had fallen a victim, not to natural maladies, nor yet to the fatigues of his

position, but to the rancorous animosity of former associates and eternal foes. It was believed that he had been *hunted to death*, with a deliberate malignity, which, to one so acutely sensitive as himself, could scarcely have been otherwise than fatal. There was much truth in this. The old aristocrats hated him as a plebeian, though Nature's self had unmistakably stamped him as a noble; the exclusives loathed him as an "adventurer;" the Tories abhorred him as an innovator; powerful and well-born rivals could not forgive him for the genius which had enabled him to climb over their heads; some could not forget his past sins; others could not endure his present virtues; and all combined to mete out to him, in overwhelming measure, the injustice, the sarcasm, the biting taunt, the merciless invective, with which, in days long gone by, he had been wont to encounter his antagonists. There was something of righteous retribution in the treatment which must have made it doubly difficult to bear:—what wonder that he sunk under the assault? But the British nation, which instinctively revolts from any flagrant want of generosity, and will not endure that a man should be punished for attempting, however tardily, to recover and do right, —have done full justice to his memory, and have never heartily pardoned his assailants.

The sudden and untimely death of Sir Robert Peel gave a severe shock to the feelings of the country, occasioned deeper and wider regret, a more painful sense of irreparable loss, and of uneasiness and appre-

hension for the future, than any similar event since the death of Canning. The loss of Mr Huskisson was a great one; but the country felt that there were others on whom his mantle had fallen who were competent to follow in his steps, and to replace him at the council board. Lord Grey, when he died, had long retired from office; he was as full of years as of honours, and the nation had nothing to anticipate from his future exertions; thus the general sentiment at his departure was one of simple sympathy and calm regret. Lord Spencer, too, popular and respected as he had once been, belonged rather to the past than to the present; and though regretted, he was no longer wanted. But long as the public career of Sir R. Peel had been, no one regarded it as closed; great as were the services which he had rendered to his country, there were yet many more which it looked to receiving at his hands. The book was still open; though no longer in the early prime, or the unbroken vigour of life, he was in that full maturity of wisdom with which age and experience seldom fail to crown an existence as energetically spent as his had been; he filled a larger space in the eyes of England and the world than any other statesman of his day and generation; and to his tried skill, his proved patriotism, his sedate and sober views, and his unmatched administrative capacity, the nation looked with confidence and hope as the sheet-anchor of its safety. We believe there never was a statesman in this country on whose trained and experienced powers, on

whose adequacy to any emergency and any trial, both friend and foe, coadjutor and antagonist, rested with such a sense of security and reliance. As long as the Duke of Wellington remained in the full possession of his powers, the country felt that it need not fear the result of any war; as long as Sir R. Peel was spared to us, the country felt that it need not lose heart at any domestic convulsion or civil crisis. Hence the universal feeling of dismay which attended the announcement of his unexpected death in 1849. It was not that we could not yet boast of many men of great administrative ability, some statesmen of profound and comprehensive views, and several rising politicians who may, in the future, vindicate their claim to high renown; but Sir R. Peel left behind him no one whom the nation esteemed his equal—no one who, naturally and by universal acclamation, stepped into his vacant place, as the acknowledged inheritor of his influence and his fame—no one whom, in case of danger or emergency, England could unanimously and instinctively place at the head of affairs.

The time has perhaps scarcely yet come for a full and impartial estimate of the character and career of this eminent man. The shock of his death is still too recent, the memory of his signal services in the great struggle of the day too fresh in the mind of the nation, and the possibility of crises, in which we shall incline to turn to him with unavailing longing, too imminent, to make it likely that we can avoid erring

on the side of lenity to his failings, and undue admiration of his capacities and his achievements. His own papers and correspondence, which we trust will shortly be given to the world, are still also a sealed book; and we may err in our estimate of some transactions for want of the light which the publication of these documents could throw over them. But on the other hand, many impressions are now fresh in our minds which fade away year by year. We have always been conscientious opponents of the great party with which he acted during four-fifths of his career; and we feel wholly free from the bias which connection with any political school can scarcely fail to create. We are conscious of no feelings or prepossessions which should prevent us from trying Sir Robert Peel by the fairest standard which morality and philosophy can set up; and if we should be thought, wherever doubt is possible, to incline to the more charitable explanation, it is because we from our hearts believe that in estimating public men in England, the more charitable our judgment is, the more likely is it to be just.

It is interesting to observe what a vast majority of our most eminent statesmen, during the last century, have been commoners, and how many even of these have sprung out of the middle class, strictly so called. William Pitt, "the great commoner," was the second son of a country gentleman, who had acquired parliamentary importance by the purchase of close boroughs.

Edmund Burke was the son of an Irish attorney. The father of Charles James Fox was the second son of a country baronet, of no very enviable reputation, in Walpole's time. Canning's father was a briefless barrister, whose family cut him off with an annuity of £150, and whose widow was afterwards obliged to support herself by going upon the stage. His friend Huskisson was the son of a country gentleman in Staffordshire, of very restricted means. The origin of Sir Robert. Peel was humbler than that of any, his father having begun life as a manufacturer in a small way, in Lancashire, and having rapidly risen to enormous wealth. These recollections are encouraging enough; they seem to indicate that, whatever may be the fate or condition of our aristocratic families, the under strata of society are fully adequate to furnish a constant supply of suitable candidates for the public service, and that there is nothing in our national system which need prevent such men from rising to their proper station. It is worthy of note, that none of these we have named owed their elevation to the legal profession, which, in all times, has been a ready ladder by which plebeian ambition could attain the highest posts.

Sir Robert Peel's father early destined him for public life, and was resolved that he should enjoy every advantage for the race he was to run. No pains was spared in his education. At Harrow he was noted for steady diligence, but not for brilliant parts. At Oxford he took a double-first. He entered

parliament in 1809; was made Under Secretary for the Colonies in 1811; Chief Secretary for Ireland in 1812; Home Secretary in 1822; Prime Minister in 1834; and again in 1841. His parliamentary life lasted just forty years; and during the whole of it, whether in or out of office, he was prominently before the public eye.

His public life exactly coincides with the eventful period during which an entire change has been wrought in the tone and spirit of our national policy, foreign and domestic—a change which he, partly intentionally, partly unconsciously, contributed much to bring about. When he appeared upon the stage, old ideas and old principles were predominant, triumphant, and almost unshaken. When, at the age of sixty-one, the curtain closed upon his career, everything had become new. When he entered public life, we were in the midst of the most desperate war England ever had to wage, undertaken on behalf of an exiled royal family, and ended by replacing them upon a throne from which they had already been once driven by popular insurrection, and from which they were soon to be ignominiously expelled a second time. Before three summers have passed over his grave, we find statesmen of every party—Lord Derby, Lord John Russell, and Lord Palmerston—vieing with each other in proclaiming as the guiding principle of the foreign policy of Britain, the acknowledgment of the indisputable right of every nation to choose its own rulers and its own form of government.

When Sir Robert Peel became Chief Secretary for Ireland at the age of twenty-four, the penal laws against the Catholics were in full force, and seemingly stereotyped in our statute book. One of his last measures during his last term of office was to endow in perpetuity the Catholic College of Maynooth. When he began life, the Test and Corporation Acts were unrepealed, and the Dissenters were fettered and irritated by numberless injustices; by the passing of the Dissenters Chapels Bill before his death he helped to sweep the last of them away. In 1809, the old glories of rotten boroughs and purchasable constituencies were untouched and unbreathed upon; the middle classes and the great towns to which England owed so much of her wealth and energy, were almost without a voice in the legislature; and the party which had held power, by a sort of prescriptive right, for a quarter of a century, was pledged to resist any change in the representation. In 1849, Parliamentary Reform had been matter of history for seventeen years, and rumours of a new and further innovation were beginning to be heard without either alarm or incredulity. In 1809 the most restrictive and protective commercial policy was not only established, but its wisdom and justice were not even questioned. In 1849, Sir Robert Peel went to his grave amid the blessings of millions, for having swept it away for ever. Finally, when he entered political life, the old Tory party seemed as rooted in Downing Street as the oak of the forest, and the Whigs to have

their permanent and natural place in opposition. When he finally quitted office, the old Tory party was broken up and obsolete, and even their modified and advanced successors maintained an unequal contest with the Liberals. Everything that the men with whom he was first connected most dreaded and deprecated had been done; everything that they pronounced impossible had come to pass. Parliament had been reformed; Catholics had been emancipated; Dissenters had been raised to a footing of equality; Unitarians and Quakers sat in St Stephens; republics had been unhesitatingly acknowledged; the corn laws and the sugar duties had been ruthlessly abolished. An entirely new spirit had been infused into our policy—the spirit of freedom and progress. If Sir Robert Peel's first chief, Mr Perceval, could return to life, he would find himself in a world in which he could recognise nothing, and in which he would be shocked at everything; and it is hard to say whether England or her quondam premier would be most scandalised at each other's mutually strange and ghastly apparition. And all this mighty change has taken place during the career, and partly by the instrumentality, of a single statesman.

Sir Robert Peel's accession to the cabinet in 1822 in place of Lord Sidmouth, synchronising as it did with Canning's return to the management of our foreign affairs, coincides with the commencement of a purer morality and a higher tone of character among public men. Since that time there has been little

jobbing, and scarcely a single transaction that could be called disgraceful among English ministers. Peculation and actual corruption, or rather corruptibility, have, it is true, never been the characteristics of our political personages since the time of Walpole and Pelham; but up to the beginning of this century, jobbing of every kind among public men was common, flagrant, and shameless. Even in the days of Pitt, places, pensions, and sinecures, were lavished with the most unblushing profusion to gratify official avarice, to reward private friendship, or to purchase parliamentary support. Ministers provided for their families and relations out of the public purse with as little scruple as bishops do now; and indeed considered it as part of the emoluments of office to be able to do so. The Prime Minister (Perceval, for example,) pocketed two or three comfortable sinecures himself, as a matter of course. Public opinion and the public press exercised only a very lax and inadequate watchfulness over the public purse. The trial of Lord Melville, First Lord of the Admiralty, for malversation, is familiar to every one. The same laxity of official morality prevailed in Perceval's time, and, indeed, with little improvement, till Lord Sidmouth's retirement. A glance over the pension and sinecure list of those days is painfully instructive. In 1810 the number of sinecures was 242, and the emoluments attached to them £279,486 a year: in 1834 these were reduced to £97,800, and they do not now exceed £17,000. In the reign of George III. the

pension list considerably exceeded £200,000 a year; and even as late as 1810, it reached £145,000: it is now reduced to £75,000; and of this sum not more than £1200 can be granted in any one year. The committee on official salaries, which sat during 1850, brought out in strong relief the contrast between the present and the past in all points connected with the purity of our administrative departments; and it is impossible to read the evidence in detail without being strongly impressed with the high morality and spotless integrity which now distinguish our public men. All the acuteness of our financial reformers on that occasion could not drag to light a single job, and scarcely a single abuse, while it placed in the very brightness of noon-day the official probity and honour of the existing race of statesmen.

But this is far from being the only improvement that has taken place among them. Their notions of patriotism have become loftier and more just; their allegiance to party more modified and discriminating; their devotion to their country more paramount and religious. They are more conscientiously obedient to their own convictions, and less submissive to the trammels of regimental discipline. Statesmen are beginning to feel not merely that they are playing a noble game, pregnant with the most thrilling interest, and involving the mightiest stakes—but that they are called upon to guide a glorious vessel, freighted with richer fortunes than ever Cæsar carried with him, through fluctuating shoals, and sunken rocks, and

eddying whirlpools, and terrific tempests; that on their skill, their watchfulness, their courage, their purity, their abnegation of all selfish aims, depend the destinies of the greatest nation that ever stood in the vanguard of civilisation and freedom; that they must not only steer their course with a steadfast purpose and a single eye, and keep their hands clean, their light burning, and their conscience clear,—but that even personal reputation and the pride of consistency must be cast aside, if need be, when the country can be best served by their immolation. They must act

"As ever in their Great Taskmaster's eye,"

and must find in these lofty views of a statesman's honour and requirements the only counteraction that can be found to the mean struggles, the wearisome details, the unworthy motives, the low and little interests with which they are brought daily into contact.

The key to all the enigmas, all the imputed guilt, all the peculiar usefulness to his country of Peel's career, is to be sought in the original contrast between his character and his position. Of a cautious and observing temper, and conscientiously desirous to do the best for his country whenever that best became clear to him, he was the son of a Tory of the narrowest and stiffest sort, whose mind had been enlarged by no culture and whom no experience perhaps could have taught; and he was at once enlisted into the ranks and served under the orders of men who rarely

doubted, who never inquired, into whose minds no suspicion ever entered that what was best for their party might possibly not be best for the nation also, to whom every article in their own creed appeared unquestionably right, and every article in their opponent's creed as unquestionably wrong. In those days —in all times perhaps to a greater or less extent— the young men whose birth or connections or parental position destined them for a political career, entered public life, as our young clergymen enter the church now, with the thirty-nine articles of their faith put, ready cut and dried, into their hands—unexamined, unquestioned, often unread; their opinions, like their lands, were a portion of their patrimony; and they no more suspected the soundness of the one than the value of the other. As at Oxford and Cambridge men are educated for the clerical profession not by a searching critical and philosophical investigation into the basis of the creed they are to teach—not by an acquisition of all those branches of knowledge which alone could entitle them to form an independent opinion on its merits—not by a judicial hearing of all that can be said against it as well as for it—but simply and solely by a memorial mastery of the items which compose it, and a competent acquaintance with the stock arguments which the learning and ingenuity of all times have discovered *in its favour*;—so were the young politicians of Peel's day prepared for the arena into which they were cast and the strife they were to wage—not by a careful study of political science in

the works of the masters who have thrown light upon it *from all sides*—not by a profound acquaintance with the wisdom which is learnt from history—not by mastering the difficult problems of political and social economy—not by a conscientious appreciation of the truth that lay in the views of their antagonists and a sedulous elimination of the error that had crept into their own,—but merely by habitually seeing and hearing only one side of every question—by imbibing every prejudice, reflecting every passion, learning to echo with thoughtless confidence every watch-cry of the party for whose service they were designed. And as our young clergymen begin their theological studies —as far as those studies consist in the first great duty of ascertaining and following the truth—only after they have assumed the livery and sworn the oath of fealty and of faith, only when the fatal document has been signed and the investiture of slavery received, only when their doom is irrevocably fixed, and when earnest and single-minded inquiry incurs the awful hazard of landing them in doctrines which they have vowed, and were enlisted, to combat and destroy, and—if they be honest men—of casting them forth upon the world with the blighted prospects and the damaged character of renegades and apostates, or at best with the stigma of instability and inconsequence for ever clinging to their name;—so did the young statesmen of Peel's epoch begin their political education when they had already taken their seats in parliament, returned by a particular interest, and on

the faith of definite or understood professions: they began to examine and reflect on political questions when such deliberation was especially difficult, because in the midst of an exasperating contest, and especially dangerous because, if sincere, it was as likely as not to lead them to desertion and damnation. Hence, with the members of both professions, it has been the too common practice—natural and, from human weakness, scarcely avoidable and only gently to be condemned—to shut their eyes and fight blindly on, endeavouring to believe themselves conscientious so long as they were consistent and satisfied, so long as they used the old weapons, marched under the old banner, and stood by the old friends.

Great as is the public evil, and severe the individual misery, arising from the source just indicated, few who reflect how large a portion of the opinions of all of us is *hereditary*, will be disposed to deal severely either with the sinners or the sufferers. We naturally adopt the views of those whom we have loved and honoured from our infancy, and it is right we should. We naturally imagine that those who have been wise and faithful in all that regards ourselves, are equally wise and faithful in matters that lie beyond the scope of our present knowledge. We naturally believe that doctrines against which we have never heard anything said, are doctrines against which nothing can be said; and we find it hard to conceive, that what we have always heard treated as axioms of science, are among the most disputable matters of opinion. Not only our positive

creed, but our tone and turn of mind, are framed instinctively after the model of those among whom we live; and thus it becomes a matter of the greatest difficulty both to enter into and do justice to the views of others when presented to us, or to divest ourselves even of what may hereafter be proved erroneous in our own. No man can start in life, whether in a political, religious, or literary career, with his mind a *carte blanche:* few can wait to take up a definite position till they have thoroughly mastered and impartially weighed all sides of the great questions with which they have to deal. In public affairs, especially, action is an essential requisite to a complete understanding of them; it is only by being involved in them that you can see deeply into them; it is only in parliament that the education of a member of parliament can be completed. It is not till you hear views diametrically opposed to those you have inherited, stated by an opponent whose powers you cannot but recognise as superior to your own, and whose sincerity of conviction you cannot doubt, that you perceive, with amazement and dismay, how doubtful appears much that you had always considered as self-evident, and how plausible seems much that you had been taught to regard as monstrous and indefensible. An abyss seems to open beneath your feet: the solid ground is no longer stable; and all the landmarks of your mind are shaken or removed. Much change, many inconsistencies, some vacillation even, should be forgiven to all who serve the

country as senators or statesmen, especially to those who enter on her service young.

Few men have drawn more largely than Sir Robert Peel on this wise indulgence, and few have had a stronger claim to have it extended to them in overflowing measure. It was his irreparable calamity to have been thrown by nature into a false position. His birth was his misfortune—a sort of original sin which clung to him through life. Born in the very centre of the Tory camp in a period when Toryism was an aggressive principle, an intolerant dogma, a fanatic sentiment,—in a period, too, when party passions were virulent and unmeasured to a degree of which we, in our times, have had only one brief specimen, and when Toryism was rampant, dominant, and narrow, in a manner which amazes and shocks us as we read the contemporary annals of those days,—Sir Robert Peel was yet endowed with native qualities which could not fail to place him at once in antagonism with his position, for he had a solid intellect, an honest conscience, an innate sense of justice and humanity, an acute observation, and a keen spirit of inquiry, which were incompatible with Toryism as it then existed,—mental and moral endowments which, from the moment he entered public life, placed him among the most liberal and enlightened of his own party, which speedily created a sort of secret uneasiness among them, and which clearly showed that he was destined either to drag them on with him or to march on before them and without them.

To this originally false position may be traced nearly all those obliquities and inconsistencies which have laid Sir Robert Peel's career so open to hostile criticism. Created of the stuff out of which moderate Liberals are made, but born into the ranks in which only rigid Tories could be found, his whole course was a sort of perpetual protest against the accident of his birth—an inevitable and perplexing struggle between his character and his circumstances, his conscience and his colleagues, his allegiance to principle and his allegiance to party. As his mind ripened and his experience increased, he was compelled, time after time, to recognise the error of the views which he had formerly maintained, and which his colleagues still adhered to; and like all progressive statesmen, he was frequently obliged to act on his old opinions, while those opinions were in process of transition, and to defend courses, the policy of which he had begun to suspect, but had not yet definitely decided to abandon. Hence, if we look at his strange and incongruous career in a severe and hostile spirit, we see a minister who through life was incessantly abandoning doctrines he had long pertinaciously upheld, and carrying out systems of policy he had long denounced as dangerous and unsound—deserting and betraying his own party, and usurping the victory of his opponents. Looking at the same career from a more generous, a more philosophic, and, as we deem it, a juster point of view, we see a statesman born in intolerant times, and cast among a

despotic and narrow-minded party, whose path through history may be traced by the *exuviæ* he has left lying by the wayside, by the garments he has outgrown and flung away, by the shackles from which he has emancipated himself, by the errors which he has abandoned and redeemed.

The political progress of a country, with free institutions and a parliamentary government like that of England, is brought about by the perpetual struggle between two great parties, each of whom is the representative — often imperfect and unworthy enough—of distinct principles and modes of thought. The predominant idea and feeling of one party, is reverence for ancestral wisdom and attachment to a glorious past, beautiful in itself, but unduly gilded by a credulous and loving fancy :—the predominant sentiment of the other is aspiration after a better future. The efforts of the first are directed to preserve and consolidate what is left to us: those of the second, to achieve whatever is not yet attained. From their contests and compromises—contests confined within fixed limits, and conducted according to certain understood rules of war—compromises by which one party foregoes something to obtain an earlier victory, and the other sacrifices something to avert an utter defeat—results the national advance towards a more humane, just, and comprehensive policy. The progress bears the stamp of the mode in which it is wrought out ; it is slow, fragmentary, and fitful ; but it is

secure against retrogression, and it never overleaps itself. It exhibits none of those mournful, disappointing, and alarming spectacles with which the political struggles of the Continent abound. The party of the past, however mighty in possession, and however doggedly entrenched, is never able *wholly* to resist. The party of the future, however elastic with the energy, and buoyant with the hopes of youth, is never powerful enough to carry *all* before it. Those who pull forward and those who hold back, never fairly break asunder. All move together—against the wish of the latter—but far more slowly than the former would desire. Neither party entirely separates from the other, as in Germany. Neither party entirely overpowers the other, as in France.

Now this peculiar character of our progress, to which must be attributed both its durability and its safety, is due to a class of men to whom England owes more than to almost any of her sons, and to whom she is in general most scandalously ungrateful —viz., the Liberals in the Conservative camp, and the Conservatives in the Liberal camp. Unappreciated by the country—misrepresented by the press—misconstrued and mistrusted by their friends—suspected of meditated desertion—reproached with virtual treason —suffering the hard but invariable fate of those who are wide among the narrow, comprehensive amid the *bornés*, moderate among the violent, sober among the drunken—condemned to combat against their brethren, and to fraternise with their antagonists—they lead a life of pain and mortification, and not

unfrequently sink under the load of unmerited obloquy, which their unusual, and therefore unintelligible, conduct brings upon them. The Liberals call them timid and lukewarm Laodiceans; the Tories call them crotchety, impracticable, and fastidious. They do the hardest duty of the conscientious patriot, and are rewarded by the bitterest abuse that could be lavished on the common enemy. Lord Falkland was one of these men; Burke was another; Lord Grey, in a measure, was a man of the same stamp. These were all Conservatives among the friends of progress. Sir Robert Peel was a Liberal, cast among the friends of stationariness and reaction. In the march of the nation towards securer prosperity, sounder principles, and a wiser policy, he occupied for more than a quarter of a century that post of pain, calumny, and mortification—but of inestimable importance also—the *Leader of the Laggards,*—the man who chained together the onward movement and the backward drag—the Reformers and the Tories; who saved the latter from being left utterly behind — stranded, useless, and obsolete; and checked the too rapid advance of the former, by acting as the bond which compelled them to draw the reluctant conservatism of society along with them.

Peel's naturally just and liberal sentiments showed themselves in various small indications early in life, and excited some uneasy misgivings in the minds of his own bigoted colleagues. As early as 1812, when eh was Irish Secretary, and when such notions were

rare among his party, he expressed in parliament his anxiety for the extension of education among the Irish peasantry; and in 1824, when he was Home Secretary, he gave great offence to the Ultra-Protestants of his party by expressing himself thus:—"In the education of the poor in Ireland, two great rules ought now to be observed: first to unite, as far as possible, without violence to individual feelings, the children of Protestants and Catholics under one common system of education; and secondly, in so doing, studiously and honestly to discard all idea of making proselytes. The Society whose exertions had been referred to [the Kildare Street Society] seemed to him to have erred in the latter respect." When he came into office, after the Reform Bill, as is well known, he steadily supported and firmly administered the system of mixed education introduced by the Whigs. As soon as he entered the Cabinet in 1822 he directed his immediate attention to the amelioration of our prison discipline and the mitigation of the scandalous severity of the criminal code, and in June of that year announced that government were preparing measures on these important topics. In March, 1826, he introduced two valuable Bills, for "the Improvement and Consolidation of the Criminal Laws," in a speech of singular modesty, discretion, and good feeling; but most unhappily he omitted to do justice to the harder labours of his predecessors in the same field; and those who remembered the persevering but unavailing efforts

of Sir Samuel Romilly, and Sir James Mackintosh, for similar objects, at a time when humanity was rarer and less reputable, could not forgive his apparently ungenerous silence. They ever afterwards accused him of "gathering where he had not strewed, and reaping where he had not sown." Three years later, when the colleague of the Duke of Wellington, he introduced one of the greatest administrative improvements of our time—the new police force in place of the old incapable nocturnal watchmen, and the inefficient and scanty parish constables. And throughout the whole of this term of office he showed the most earnest spirit of economy and retrenchment, such as extorted the applause even of the Opposition. "They," says Mr Roebuck (vol. i. p. 164), "who were most conversant with the finances of the country considered that economy was carried further than had been yet known, and that a spirit of fairness and complete freedom from jobbing or nepotism pervaded every branch of the administration." Mr Hume, who was undoubtedly the most earnest advocate for retrenchment in the House, frankly acknowledged that "the Chancellor of the Exchequer had gone as far as he imagined he could go with safety on the present occasion." Mr Baring and Mr Huskisson, both great authorities on such subjects, confessed that "the Chancellor of the Exchequer had gone to the utmost verge of reduction possible in the present state of the country, without the substitution of other taxes." And generally the selection of the taxes to

be taken off was deemed judicious—and made solely with a view to public and not partial interests.—We have enumerated briefly these points in Sir Robert Peel's career, to prove that the liberalism which he showed so increasingly in later life was no external element superinduced upon his character by the change in his political position and party connections, but one which had been always present, though long kept under restraint by unsympathising colleagues and the native caution of his temperament.

Many of Sir Robert Peel's qualities and defects as a minister lay upon the surface, and might be comprehended at a glance. He was not a man of genius; he was not a man of consistent action; he had nothing of the deep-seated science of the philosophic statesman; and till the last four or five years of his life, he displayed nothing of the high historic grandeur of the patriot-hero. But he had other qualifications and endowments, which, if less grand and rare, were probably more suited to the age in which his lot was cast, and the part which he was called upon to play. In the first place, he was, pre-eminently, and above all things, *prudent*. Cautious by temperament, moderate by taste, his instinctive preference was always for a middle course: he disliked rashness, and he shrank from risk; the responsibilities of office were always for him a sobering and retarding weight: and those who watched his course and studied his character, early perceived that he was not a leader who would ever push matters to an extreme, or put to

hazard the tranquillity or the welfare of the country by too pertinacious and protracted an adherence to personal sentiments or old opinions, or by too desperate a fidelity to prejudice or party. He might be too tardy sometimes in yielding; but no one doubted that he would yield, if it became obviously wise and necessary to do so. He carried prudence almost to the height of genius, and early earned for himself the most serviceable of all reputations in this country—that of being a "safe man."

Connected with this leading characteristic was another of the same order. He was uniformly *decorous*, and had a high sense of dignity and propriety. He was a worshipper of the το πρεπον both in manners and in conduct. He scarcely ever offended against either the conventional or the essential *bienséances* of society. He never made enemies, as Canning did, by ill-timed levity or heartless jokes. His speeches and those of his brilliant colleague, on the occasion of the Manchester massacre, place in strong contrast the distinctive peculiarities of the two men. Both took the same side, and nearly the same line of defence; but the tone of the one was insolent and unfeeling, that of the other dignified and judicial. The language of Canning on that occasion was never forgotten or forgiven: after a few years no one remembered that Peel had ever had the misfortune to defend so bad a cause. Peel, too, had, even at the beginning of his career, too great a respect for his own character, to

allow himself to be dragged through the dirt by his superior colleagues. Even when his position obliged him to excuse what was indefensible, he contrived to allow his inward disapproval to pierce through his apology. He was fortunate enough, or skilful enough, to be out of office during the memorable prosecution of the Queen; and the only time that he was compelled to speak upon that disgraceful business, he expressed a grave regret that a suitable palace had not been provided for her Majesty, and that her name had been excluded from the liturgy.

One requisite for an English statesman—perhaps at the present day the most indispensable of all—in which the Whigs generally have been singularly deficient—Peel possessed in unusual measure, at least in the latter portion of his life—viz., a quick and instinctive perception of public opinion. He had a keen and sensitive ear to the voice of the nation, and an almost unerring tact in distinguishing the language of its real leaders and movers from that of mere noisy and unimportant declaimers. He seems first to have acquired this faculty in 1829, or at least to have awakened to a sense of its vast importance; and the memorable two years during which the Reform Bill was under discussion—a time in which his political education advanced with marvellous rapidity—brought it almost to perfection. This peculiar tact Lord John Russell never has been able to learn. And in truth it is not easy to acquire it, or to say how it is to be acquired. It is an instinct rather than an attainment;

and an aristocracy which does not belong to the people, or live much with them, or sympathise promptly in their feelings, seldom possesses it. Public opinion expresses itself in many ways; its various organs hold fluctuating language, and give forth conflicting oracles; the powerful classes are often silent; the uninfluential classes are generally clamorous. If novel and important measures are proposed, those who concur are commonly satisfied with a quiet and stately nod of approbation: those who object are loud and vehement in their opposition. How, amid these contradictory perplexities, is a statesman to ascertain the sentiments of the intelligent and effective portion of the nation? If he goes to the members of the House of Commons, he cannot overlook the fact that they represent only the feelings of their constituents, or, it may be, of their nominators; and that the unrepresented, or the unequally represented, portion of the community forms a most essential element in the popular opinion. At best, members cannot be relied on to speak more than the sentiments of the country at the time of their election; and they, like the minister, are students of the same problem, and puzzled with the same conflicting clamours. If he looks to petitions, he is inquiring in a most deceptive quarter; for we all know how even "monster" petitions can be "got up." If he looks to public meetings, he cannot fail to be aware that their importance and significance depend entirely on the character and position of the people who take a part

in them; that there are meetings of many thousands in the open air, which it would be folly to listen to, and mere weakness to respect; and meetings of a few scores "in an upper chamber," indicative of an influence and of sentiments which it would be absolute insanity to disregard. Lastly, if he looks to the press, how is he to know among what class of readers each newspaper circulates? How can he tell whether it is really expressing their sentiments, or merely seeking to lead them to its own. How can he ascertain whether on any particular topic, such as Lord Palmerston or the Poor Law, the "Times" is actually the organ of public opinion, or only that of private malignity, or idiosyncratic crotchets? How is he to distinguish how many of its readers read it with disgust and disagreement, like himself, and how many with acquiescence and credulity? Where the press is not unanimous, or nearly so—where it is widely divided in its judgments, as is almost constantly the case—how is the statesman to apportion to each organ its actual influence, or the number and weight of its clients, so as to gather from the whole something like an accurate estimate of the national expression? It is abundantly obvious that he must be left very much to the guidance of his own sagacity; and with this sagacity Sir Robert Peel was endowed in a most unusual measure. After 1832, he scarcely ever made the mistake—which his antagonists were making every day—of not knowing whose quiet voice to listen to, and whose clamorous demands to disregard.

Sir Robert Peel was not certainly a statesman of the highest order which we can picture to ourselves for the government of a great state; but it is by no means so clear that he was not the most finished specimen of that peculiar class of statesmen who alone can find a place in a representative constitution such as ours, in which the democratic element so largely preponderates. He had no far-seeing plans for the preservation and regeneration of the empire, which he kept in view through all vicissitudes, and to which, amid all his various terms of office, he perseveringly made everything conduce. His policy was based upon no profound or well-digested system, upon no philosophic principle to which he could adhere through good report and ill report, and keep ever before him as the guide and pole-star of his career. To praise like this he has no claim. He often erred as to what ought to be done, and he often discovered it deplorably too late. But whatever he had to do he did well. He had the rare merit, among our public characters, of being a thorough *man of business*. He was a statesman of consummate administrative ability. His measures were always concocted with the most deliberate and patient skill. His budgets were models of clearness and compactness. As soon as discussion began, it was made apparent that he had weighed every difficulty and foreseen every objection. He was always master of his subject. The result was that his proposals scarcely ever underwent any alteration in their passage through

parliament; they might be accepted or rejected; they were never mutilated or transmogrified. Those of his opponents, on the other hand, even when in the plenitude of their power, and commanding such a majority as had backed scarce any minister since the days of Pitt, were so clipped, curtailed, modified, and added to, that when they came forth from the ordeal, the parents could scarcely recognize their own offspring. Peel's measures were finished laws before they were brought forward; the Whig proposals were seldom more than the raw materials of legislation thrown down on the floor of the House of Commons, to be wrought by that manufactory into the completed fabric. Hence grew a general conviction, that though the Whigs were often right, yet that they could not be trusted to embody their own ideas in suitable and judicious enactments;—that Peel might be often mistaken, yet that he was always *up to his work.* He was often on the wrong tack, but he always sailed well.

Peel's whole heart was in the public service. He seemed actually to love toil. He was indefatigable and most conscientious in the performance of his official duties. The veriest drudge of office was not more constant at his desk. The most plodding committee-man could not rival him in the persevering regularity of his attendance in the House of Commons. During his short but most memorable ministry in 1835, he went through an amount of labour that was almost incredible. He was Chancellor of the Ex-

chequer as well as First Lord of the Treasury. He had scarcely a single colleague competent to afford him any efficient aid. He had to struggle against a hostile House of Commons, and a mistrusting country. The fight was not of his choosing, and he knew from the first that it was a hopeless one. But he contended gallantly to the last—toiling incessantly from seven o'clock in the morning till long past midnight—and when at last he resigned, he had risen fifty per cent. in public estimation.

We now come to the great peculiarity of Sir Robert Peel's career—that which has brought upon him the accusation of being a traitor, a turn-coat, a man of infirm purpose, and of variable and inconstant views—*want of consistency.* On three several occasions he recanted all his previous professions—adopted the opinions he had hitherto strenuously opposed—and carried out the policy which he had been accustomed to denounce as mistaken and dangerous. He did so on the question of a metallic basis for the currency; he did so on the question of Catholic Emancipation; he did so on the question of the Corn Laws. All were topics of first-rate magnitude—all involved great and long-contested principles—on all his views underwent an entire and radical change. For this change he was bitterly reproached with treachery and tergiversation by those who did not see the truth as soon as he did, and by those who have not seen it yet; he was ungenerously

taunted by those who were wise enough or happy enough to see it earlier; and made the subject of depreciation and grave rebuke by those who appear to hold that if a statesman cannot discern the right path at the beginning of his career, he ought at least to persevere in the wrong one to the end.

Now this charge of "inconsistency" and tergiversation has so long been popularly regarded as the heaviest and most damaging that can be brought against the character of politicians, that it is well worth while to spend a few moments in inquiring *how* it comes to be so estimated, and how much of justice may be awarded to this estimate, when weighed in the balance of unprejudiced reason. When a statesman draws himself proudly up, and declares amid the prolonged cheering of his audience, "*I* never abandoned my party; *I* never changed my opinions; *I* never voted in favour of measures *I* had spent the best years of my life in opposing," he imagines that he is putting forth the most irrefragable claim to public confidence and admiration. When he seeks the most fatal and irritating weapon with which to wound or discredit an antagonist, he rakes up from buried volumes of Hansard the expression of sentiments and doctrines widely at variance with those now professed, and taunts him with sitting side by side with colleagues who were his foes in years gone by; and the arrow generally strikes home; and though none are invulnerable by it, none seem able to refrain from using it, and none can receive it

without suffering and shrinking. Why is this? Why should the charge be felt so painfully?

The explanation is an historical one. Our morality and our sensibility on this subject have descended to us from those days when parliament was not an assembly in which the interests of the nation were discussed by the representatives of the nation with the object of ascertaining its wishes and promoting its welfare, but an arena in which trained gladiators contended for the mastery—a field of battle in which two marshalled hosts contended for the victory; days when senators were not men selected by the people to investigate, deliberate, and legislate for the exigencies and the progress of the country according to the best light which science and study could bring to shine upon them—but soldiers enlisted for an avowed cause, marching under a known banner, owing allegiance and obedience to an acknowledged chief. Hence the morality of parliament *then* was the morality of *military* life; and in the military code, desertion is the most heinous of all crimes. Again, in those times from which our present party morality has been inherited—the times of Walpole, and Pelham, and the first Pitt—tergiversation and change of party were nearly always traceable, or supposed to be traceable, to some mean or sinister motive. It was generally accompanied and explained by the acceptance of a peerage, a pension, or a place.

From these two circumstances, it naturally resulted that political inconstancy was regarded less as

indicative of a mental process of conviction, than as involving personal honour; the accusation was a flagrant insult; the fact was fatal to a statesman's popularity and the stainless purity of his reputation. But why the same conventional rule of judgment should be maintained *now*, when no senator is ever influenced in his changes by the promise of a bribe or the hope of a place, and scarcely ever by low ambition or personal pique, and when members of parliament are not party combatants, but deliberating legislators, it is not easy to perceive. Still less reasonable does it seem when we reflect that no statesman of the present generation, and scarcely any of the last, can point to a career of unswerving consistency. Lord Eldon, indeed, was a model of unchanging constancy; but it is impossible to regard this as a virtue in him, for we know that it was the result of a bigoted temper, and a narrow mind, and was about the most mischievous of his many noxious qualities.

Had all his colleagues been like him, we should, ere now, have seen a revolution as complete and unsparing as that of France. "What a consistent career has Lord Eldon's been," wrote a contemporary of his in 1829, "the ever active principle of evil in our political world! In the history of the universe no man has the praise of having effected as much good for his fellow-creatures as Lord Eldon has thwarted." The consistent career of the late Lord Grey does, indeed, present many points for admiration; but we

must remember that Lord Grey started in life with opinions far in advance of his day and generation, many of which were wholly inapplicable and out of place then; and there was more than one occasion both in early and in later life, when his fidelity to party led him into language and conduct deplorably inconsiderate, unworthy, and unjust. Among living statesmen who can point to a consistent career, in the ordinary sense of the term? Is it Lord Derby, who was at one time the fiercest assailant, and at another the subordinate minister of Peel; at one time the vigorous reformer, at another time the resolute stickler for the intact existence of the Irish Church? Is it Sir James Graham, the Radical of early days, who, in 1831, stood in the very van of the Whig party, as the colleague of Lord Durham and Lord Grey; who, in 1835, was a devoted adherent of the seceding Lord Stanley; and in 1845, a colleague of Sir Robert Peel, and an opponent of Lord Stanley? Is it Lord Palmerston, who has held office successively under the Duke of Portland, Mr Perceval, Lord Liverpool, Sir Robert Peel, Mr Canning, Lord Grey, and Lord John Russell?

Is it Mr Gladstone, either in what he has done or in what he has contemplated? Is it Mr Disraeli, the quondam Radical, the present leader of the reactionary rump? Finally, is it even Lord John Russell, who made the "appropriation clause" a *sine qua non* in 1835, and passed a bill without it in 1838; who opposed the motion for an inquiry

into the operation of the Corn Laws in 1839; who proposed a fixed duty of eight shillings in 1841, and declared for total repeal in 1845? We do not mean to intimate that all these statesmen were not conscientious, and may not even have been right in their various changes of party and modifications of opinion; but assuredly none of them can lay claim to the attribute of immutability.

There is a wise, and there is an unwise, species of political constancy. There is a narrow and mechanical, and there is a large and comprehensive, view of the same great principle of rectitude. There is a steadiness of opinion and of purpose which imbues itself with noble sentiments, and places great objects ever before it; which, having studied deliberately the best interests of the country and decided the direction in which it ought to steer, keeps those interests and that goal in view through all bewildering storms, and through every intervening cloud; which in each emergency selects that policy best suited, during that emergency, for nearing the appointed haven; which in every danger chooses and follows the pilot who best understands that peculiar portion of the chart of destiny over which the vessel of the state is at that moment steering; and which knows how to preserve an essential, if not a superficial, consistency by varying its means and its course to secure the unity of its end. And there is a stubbornness of will, an unbending *rectilinearness* of march, like that of the Norwegian Leming, which cannot

comprehend that perils which press from one quarter are not to be met by the same weapons and the same attitude which is appropriate against those which menace from an opposite direction; which would apply the same panacea to every social malady, and to every condition of the patient—to the state of excitement and the state of collapse; which cannot conceive that altered national circumstances may demand altered national policy; which, in the difficult navigation of public life, ascertains its position and calculates its course, not by fixed landmarks, but by floating fragments—not by objects eternal in the heavens, but by objects moving upon earth; and which deludes itself into a belief that it is nobly pursuing one consistent purpose, so long as it is surrounded by the same familiar faces, and uttering the old ancestral shibboleth of party—though the circumstances which made its companions patriots, and its war-cry a just and noble reality, have long since been reversed. There is a perseverance which is "instant in season;" there is a pertinacity which is instant "out of season;" and there is a national purblindness which confounds the two qualities—so diametrically distinct—in one common admiration. Finally, there is a consistency—the boast of the shallow and the vain, but often of the conscientious too—which forms its opinions, collects its maxims, and adopts its party according to the best light it has, and then shuts the door of the mind against all disturbing knowledge and all bewildering

and novel illumination,—which petrifies into impenetrability or congeals into a frozen fog. And there is an open and earnest convincibility, which, aware that the utmost wisdom it can attain at the outset of its career is at best fragmentary and imperfect, is constantly storing up new facts, mastering new discoveries, deliberating on new arguments, profiting by old errors, digesting the lessons of past experience; which feels that the first duty of a high position is to abjure prejudice, and give to the country the full benefit of every added information, of every successful experiment, of every elaborated science. Men of this stamp of mind are marked out for misrepresentation and for taunt; they are made the butt of every Tory blockhead to whom so unegotistical a conscience, so lofty and unconventional a standard of public duty, are things utterly incomprehensible; but they are the men who most truly serve, and most often save, their country, and the country generally appreciates them better than either parliament or party.

The truth is that in a country of free institutions, like England, of which progress is the law and life, that sort of inconsistency which is implied in political *conversion* must be not only an admitted fact, but a recognised prerogative; and in an age of transition like that in which we live, these conversions must be necessarily frequent and rapid. Were it otherwise—were conversion a forbidden thing—the strife of parties would become a war of extermination; the nation could advance in her course of enlarging and

enlightening policy only by the death or political extinction of the conservative statesmen. Not only would our progress be more tardy, but it would be more fitful, spasmodic, and dangerous. There would be no change till by process of election or of death the obstructions were reduced to an absolute and permanent minority, and then the change would be sudden and immense. We should lose all the advantage and all the safety which now arises from the gradual modifications which take place in the views of the most reflective statesmen of all parties, and by the ceaseless and often almost imperceptible passing over of influential politicians from one camp to the other: those who, yielding to the moulding spirit of the age, and the influx of new impressions, desert the ranks of the Tories for those of the Reformers, carrying with them many of their early associations with a venerated past and much of the native conservatism of their temperament: those, on the other hand, who having achieved the great reforms on which they had set their hearts, or swayed by the insensible influence of increasing years, begin to fear the too rapid encroachments of the democratic element, and therefore join the ranks of the retarders, carrying with them to the quarters of their former antagonists many of their popular sympathies, and some faint embers of their old enthusiasm for reform. A progress which draws the old nation along with it is not only securer, but far more *complete* than one which results from the defeat of one party and the predominance of another;

and for this it is essential that the *liberty of conversion* should be upheld as one of the indisputable privileges of our public men. But, like all other liberties, it must be surrounded with such guarantees, limits, and conditions as shall prevent it from degenerating into licence.

These conditions are three:—the public have a right to require from a statesman who abandons his former opinions, or party, that his changes shall not be vacillations, but advances; that they shall be fairly and candidly avowed as soon as decided; and that they should not, if possible, be in the direction of his personal interest; not so much so at least as to give the slightest fair opening for ascribing them to sinister motives. Let us try Sir Robert Peel's conversions by this standard.

In the first place, though a perpetually changing, he was never a vacillating statesman. His course was essentially *progressive*. Every step he took was a step forward. He never "tried back." From the Peel of 1812 to the Peel of 1829, the advance is rapid and remarkable: from the Peel of 1829 to the Peel of 1849, the improvement is so wonderful that individual identity is almost lost. He began life as the underling of Lord Sidmouth—the shallowest, narrowest, most *borné*, and most benighted of the old Tory crew. He ended life leading the vanguard of the most liberal of the matured statesmen of the age. He began life the advocate of the civil disqualifications of Catholics and Dissenters. He ended it the

advocate of complete religious freedom. He was born a monopolist; he passed through many phases of gradual emancipation, and at last died a free-trader. Unlike Lord Stanley, who started from the front rank of the Reformers, and has now, in his course of retrogression, reached almost the rear rank of the Obstructives,—Sir Robert Peel started in the race with every disadvantage, clogged with every weight and fetter which could impede his progress; but he cast them one by one aside, and advanced, with slow and timid, but not oscillating footsteps, to complete emancipation from early prejudices and from old connections.

Further, in all his changes, as soon as he saw his way clearly, he stood to his colours manfully. "When he was ambiguous, unsatisfactory, reserved, and tortuous," says Mr Disraeli, "it was that he was perplexed, and did not see his way." When once he had fixed upon his line, he never attempted to shirk the consequences or corollaries of his new policy. He not only accepted, cheerfully and candidly, the deliberate decisions of the legislature, even when opposed to his own opinions, as settled and accomplished facts (as in the case of the Reform Bill); but when his ripening convictions, or the wisdom which time and experience brought with them, compelled him to retreat from a position, to retract a policy, or avow a change, he never attempted to deny the fact, or extenuate the magnitude of that change—he was never guilty of the common subterfuge of little

minds—of endeavouring, by petty and underhand manœuvres, to counteract the effect of the course he was publicly obliged to take. He did not do things by halves, or in a niggard and reluctant spirit. When, in 1819, a careful inquiry in a committee of the House of Commons produced an entire change of opinion on the subject of our metallic currency, the bill which he then introduced for the resumption of cash payments was a complete and thorough measure, and formed the basis for all his subsequent action on the same topic in 1834 and 1844. When in 1829 he felt obliged, in direct contravention of all his previous policy, to concede emancipation to the Catholics, the measure he brought forward was a complete and generous one. There were no needless reservations of the high places of the state; there was no attempt to save appearances by the enactment of fancied securities; there were no evasive clauses, to undo by a side-wind the manifest and declared intention of the measure. It was as graceful a surrender at discretion as could well be made; and not only did he subsequently show no wish to undo his work, or to escape from its consequences, but in his steady support of the Irish national education system, in his augmentation and establishment of the Maynooth Grant, and in his erection of the "Godless Colleges," he uniformly proved himself prepared and resolved to act in the spirit of his own great measure. The Reform Bill was carried against his most strenuous opposition; but having been carried, after deliberate

discussion, by the pronounced will of the nation, Sir Robert Peel struck no back-handed blow at its efficiency. And when, in 1846, he at length perceived the wisdom and necessity of a resignation of the corn laws, he proposed, not the half-way house of a fixed duty, but total abolition—while admitting that in so doing he laid himself open to the deepest obloquy and the most unsparing criticism. And ever afterwards he supported ministers manfully, whenever this measure, or any of its consequences, was in question. When, therefore, a statesman's changes have thus invariably been slowly and cautiously made, honestly avowed, resolutely and unflinchingly carried out, and when, above all, they have always been *in one direction* — not backwards and forwards, but invariably onward—what more can be said in defence of inconsistency, if inconsistency in a statesman be allowable at all?

Secondly, Sir Robert Peel always fulfilled the other conditions we have specified as required to sanction change of opinion and to redeem it from moral reprobation. In many of the most important measures of his life, he adopted the views and carried out the plans of his opponents; but (save on one occasion, which has been already noticed) he was always careful to render honour where honour was due—to give the credit of triumph of the principles he had tardily embraced to those who had early maintained them. Thus in 1811, just after his entrance into public life, and probably before he

had time to give any consideration to the subject, he adopted the views of his ignorant and bigoted old father on the Bank Restriction Act, and voted against the celebrated bullion resolutions of Francis Horner. But when, in 1819, in compliance with the order of a select committee of the House of Commons, he introduced his measure for the resumption of cash payments, we find him saying: "I am ready to avow without shame or remorse that my views on this subject were materially different when I voted against the resolutions brought forward in 1811 by Mr Horner, as chairman of the bullion committee; but having gone into this inquiry determined to dismiss all former impressions, to apply to the subject my unprejudiced attention, and to adopt every inference that authentic information or mature reflection could offer to my mind—I now conceive the principles laid down by Mr Horner to represent the true nature and laws of our monetary system; and it is without shame or repentance that I thus bear testimony to the superior sagacity of that distinguished statesman." In 1829, in bringing forward his memorable bill for Catholic emancipation, Sir Robert Peel spoke as follows:—"The credit of this measure belongs to others, not to me. It belongs to Fox, to Grattan, to Plunket, to the gentlemen opposite (the Whigs), and to an illustrious friend of mine (Mr Canning), who is now no more. By their efforts, in spite of my opposition, it has proved victorious." Again, in 1846, on the night when he took leave of power

after the final carrying of the repeal of the corn laws, the crown and consummation of a long series of measures in the direction of free trade, he spoke thus :—"The name which ought to be associated with the success of these measures, is not the name of the noble lord opposite, nor is it mine. The name which ought to be and will be, associated with those measures, is that of one, who acting, as I believe, from pure and disinterested motives, has, with untiring energy, made appeals to our reason, and has enforced those appeals with an eloquence the more to be admired because it was unaffected and unadorned—the name which ought chiefly to be associated with the success of these measures is the name of Richard Cobden."

Sir Robert Peel never attempted to disguise or diminish the fact of his change of opinion. When decided and complete, it was always manfully avowed as soon as circumstances would permit. The tergiversation which has brought upon him the severest animadversion was that which took place on the Catholic question. In the passionate language of the time, it was designated by no gentler name than that of treachery. It is worth while, both for the sake of the individual and for the elucidation of political morality, to go a little closer into the facts of this remarkable question. In the first place, it is alleged that to change at all on such a topic reflects no honour on his sagacity: for this was no new question, with respect to which want of knowledge

or of previous consideration could be pleaded. The subject was one specially connected with his earliest official situation: it had always been a prominent one: he had been in the habit of discussing it for seventeen years. Every argument in favour of the *principle* of Catholic emancipation had been repeatedly urged upon him, and been repeatedly repudiated by him. Every danger likely to arise from its refusal had been pointed out in the clearest manner, and with wearisome reiteration, and had been by him denied, undervalued, or despised. How came the truth to dawn upon him so slowly, and to be admitted so reluctantly? And how can the long persistence and the tardy recantation be reconciled with any character for statesmanship?

Little can be said to weaken the force of these representations, except that the whole history of the question shows the peculiar character of the man's mind. It was his nature to yield to conviction slowly and reluctantly. He was *born* on the wrong side, and it cost him seventeen years of warfare to get right. That, with his hereditary notions as to the sanctity and authority of the English Church, he should shrink from throwing open the doors of the constitution to the hereditary and irreconcilable enemies of that church, does not surprise us. That, knowing the Irish Catholics as he did, he should dread and deprecate the introduction of such men into the British legislature, surprises us still less. The conduct of the "Irish Brigade" in recent years

has shown us that he was not wholly wrong. But that a man naturally so just and equitable should not have shrunk from denying to so large and respectable a body of his fellow-subjects the full rights of citizenship, does, we confess, appear incongruous. And that so keen an observer and so cool a reasoner should have so long continued blind to the danger, increasing every year, arising from the internecine strife, is quite inexplicable, and clearly shows that at this period of his life he read "the signs of the times" far less truly and promptly than he afterwards learnt to do. But it must be observed that he himself placed the cause of his yielding in 1829 what he had till then opposed, upon its right footing. It was a change of *policy*, not a change of *opinion*. He held as strongly as ever his conviction of the desirableness of Catholic exclusion. But it was no longer possible. *Circumstances had changed.* Through the organising and agitating powers of Mr O'Connell, the danger of refusing had at length become greater than the danger of conceding,—*and therefore only did he yield.* He chose then, as he had chosen hitherto, that which he believed to be the least of two evils for his country. Catholic emancipation and civil war were both mischiefs to be dreaded and averted; but the latter was the worst mischief of the two. When the alternative was put thus clearly before him, he logically and inevitably gave way. "According to my heart and conscience," said he, "I believe that the time is come when less danger is to be appre-

hended to the general interests of the empire, and to the spiritual and temporal welfare of the Protestant establishment, in attempting to adjust the Catholic question, than in allowing it to remain any longer in its present state. . . . . Looking back upon the past, surveying the present, and forejudging the prospect of the future, again I declare that the time has at length arrived when this question must be adjusted. . . . . I have for years attempted to maintain the exclusion of Roman Catholics from parliament and the high offices of the state. I do not think it was an unnatural or unreasonable struggle. I resign it in consequence of the conviction that it can no longer be advantageously maintained. . . . . I yield, therefore, to a moral necessity which I cannot control, being unwilling to push resistance to a point which might endanger the establishments that I wish to defend." In plain words, he saw that he was defeated, and therefore capitulated, to save useless bloodshed and a worse catastrophe. This was not the language of a great or a foreseeing statesman; but it was the language of a prudent and conscientious minister, and of an honest man.

"But," it is said, "if such were his views, he should not have proposed Catholic emancipation at all. He should have resigned, and have left the settlement of that great question, with its satisfaction and its glory, to those whose opinions regarding it were thus proved to have been right." Undoubtedly he would have consulted both his own feelings and

his own fame by acting thus; and under ordinary circumstances this would have been the proper course to have pursued. But higher than mere personal considerations were here involved. Let us look into the details of the case: in them we believe we shall find his complete justification.

The state of affairs, as already stated, produced, towards the close of the year 1828, in the minds both of the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel, a strong conviction that the government of Ireland, on the old system, had become impossible, and that Catholic emancipation must be conceded, if they were not prepared to hazard the alternative of civil war. Having arrived at this conviction, the first point was of course to secure that a measure for this purpose *should be carried;* the second, *longo intervallo,* was that it should be carried by the proper parties. Fortunately, the publication of Lord Eldon's correspondence has thrown great light upon the ministerial difficulties at this crisis. Lord Eldon, who hated the Catholics like poison, was in constant communication with the King, and has described his state of mind in vivid colours. George IV., whose conscience had never in the course of sixty years withheld him from the indulgence of any bad passion or the commission of any agreeable crime, felt an insuperable objection, partly of mortified pride, partly of alarmed scruple, to conceding Catholic emancipation. He could not, however, turn a deaf ear to the representations of his ministers. He at length assented to their

proposals. Then he withdrew his assent. He played fast and loose with them; entreated them to forego their intentions; entreated them not to desert him; empowered Lord Eldon to see if he could not rescue him from them; kept them in doubt up to the last moment whether he would not break his pledged word, and by pronouncing the royal veto give the signal for civil war. These difficulties with the King ministers could not explain—could scarcely even hint at; and hence their explanations always seemed incomplete and unsatisfactory. The history of the case was this, as we know it now from authentic sources.[1]

In August, 1828, after the close of the session, Sir Robert Peel wrote confidentially to the Duke of Wellington, explaining to him in the clearest manner the absolute necessity of at once settling this great question, which had now reached a position which made all government impossible, and concluding in this manly language :—

"I must at the same time express a very strong opinion, that it would not conduce to the satisfactory adjustment of the question, that the charge of it in the House of Commons should be committed to my hands.

"I put all personal feelings out of the question. They are, or ought to be, very subordinate considerations in matters of such moment; and I give the best proof that I disregard them, by avowing that I am quite ready to commit myself to the support of the principle of a measure of ample concession and relief, and to use every effort to promote the final arrangement of it.

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[1] "Lord Eldon's Life and Correspondence." Speech of Sir R. Peel in the House of Commons, Dec. 17, 1831.

"But my support will be more useful, if I give it with the cordiality with which it shall be given, *out of office*. Any authority which I may possess, as tending to reconcile the Protestants to the measure, would be increased by my retirement. I have been too deeply committed on the question—have expressed too strong an opinion with respect to it—too much jealousy and distrust of the Roman Catholics—too much apprehension as to the immediate and remote consequences of yielding to their claims—to make it advantageous to the King's service that I should be the individual to originate the measure."

From that period to the end of the year the ministers were occupied in endeavouring to obtain the consent and to fix the mind of the false and vacillating monarch. When this consent was finally obtained, and it became necessary to prepare for meeting parliament on the new footing, Sir Robert Peel, on the 12th of January 1829, again wrote to the Duke, praying for permission to retire, stating, "that retirement from office was the only step he could take which would be at all satisfactory to his own feelings, and deprecating in the most earnest manner his being the person to bring forward the measure in the House of Commons." But in the meantime the difficulties of the Duke had been greatly increased by the announced hostility of the bench of bishops, and he intimated to Sir Robert Peel that he could not maintain his ground if he (Sir Robert Peel) persisted in resigning. "The earnest appeal, also, made to him by the King, not to shrink from proposing a measure which, as a minister, he advised the King to adopt, left him no alternative, consistent with honour and public duty, but to make the bitter sacrifice of every personal feeling, and himself to originate the measure

of Roman Catholic Relief. Could he, when the King thus appealed to him—when the King referred to his own scruples, and uniform opposition to the measure in question—when he said, 'You advise this measure—you see no escape from it—you ask me to make the sacrifice of opinion and consistency—will not you make the same sacrifice?' What answer could he return to his sovereign but the one he did return? viz., that he would make that sacrifice, and would bear his full share of the responsibility and unpopularity of the measure he advised."

The plain and brief truth of the case was this:—the safety of the country required that Catholic emancipation should be at once conceded—of this there was no doubt. The Whigs, no doubt, ought to have carried it,—but the King, it was well known, would not endure a Whig ministry, and the King was impracticable, testy, and prevaricating, and manageable by no one but the Duke. If the Duke had resigned he would have thrown himself into the hands of the old Tories, emancipation would have been refused, and civil war and national retrogression and disgrace would have been the consequence. But the Duke's resignation would have been necessitated by Peel's retirement. As an honest and disinterested patriot, therefore, Sir Robert Peel, in our judgment had no option but to act as he did act.

Considerable blame was thrown upon Sir Robert Peel at the time, on the ground of the apparent suddenness of his conversion. In 1828, it is said, he

declared that his opinion as to the impolicy of concession remained unchanged, while at the beginning of 1829 he himself proposed concession. And, more than this, he allowed his brother and brother-in-law to deliver speeches at public meetings in various parts of the country, most violent and decided in their denunciations of Catholic emancipation, at the very time when it appeared he had advised his sovereign to grant emancipation, and shortly before he himself proposed it to parliament. With regard to the latter charge, which brought upon him much odium and the bitter indignation of his relatives, it will suffice to observe that not only could he not, consistently with his oath and duty as a cabinet minister, have given them any intimation of the change under consideration,—but that from the vacillation and unreliableness of the King, ministers themselves felt no security *till the speech from the throne was actually delivered*, that they would be allowed to bring forward their proposals, and that infinite mischief and embarrassment would have resulted from permitting their intention to leak out before the monarch was publicly committed on the subject. With regard to the suddenness of Sir Robert Peel's conversion, we know now that it was rather apparent than real; and of sudden ministerial changes in general a more honourable explanation can be given than is commonly supposed. Men in public life, and more especially ministers in actual office, when new facts, deeper reflection, stronger arguments,

or altered positions, come to shake their previous opinions and produce an incipient change, are placed in a situation of singular difficulty. They can seldom retire or lie by till the inchoate operation is complete; their position often calls upon them for constant action and perpetual speech; in the meantime, they are obliged to conceal from the public the mental process which has just commenced, so long as it is imperfect and uncertain; they must speak and act in accordance with their past, not with their future selves; if they speak, they must speak in conformity with the old opinions over which doubt is gradually creeping; if they act, they must act on the principles which they are beginning to abandon, not on those which they are beginning, but only beginning, to adopt. This is a hard and painful position; yet it is one which duty to their colleagues and their country not unfrequently compels public men to endure. Like other men, if they are honest, inquiring, and open-minded, they must inevitably find modification after modification coming over their opinions in the course of their career, as knowledge ripens, as facts develop, as wisdom matures. Yet for a leading senator to be silent, or for a chief minister to retire, every time he felt the first warning symptoms of such an alteration, would be simply impracticable in actual life, though no doubt the most comfortable course for his own feelings, and the safest for his reputation. Thus he is in a manner obliged, by the requirements of his position, to continue making the best defence

he can for his old course and his old principles till his *suspicion* of their unsoundness has risen into a clear and settled *conviction;* and when, having arrived at this point, he suddenly and conscientiously avows his change, there is unquestionably, *primâ facie*, a very dark case against him. We believe we have here indicated the secret of that course of conduct which brought down so much obloquy upon Sir Robert Peel on two memorable occasions in 1829 and in 1846. We do not affirm that it presents a full justification : but we do hold that it affords a fair and not discreditable explanation of many apparently sudden or too rapid changes in the opinions and measures of public men.

In the third place, a statesman's changes, we have said, ought never to be so manifestly in the direction of his personal advantage as to leave any decent ground for attributing them, either wholly or in part, to sinister or interested motives. On this head, Sir Robert Peel's tergiversations stand free from the slightest suspicion. Whatever might have been said in the angry surprise of the moment by a deserted and disappointed party, everyone now feels not only that all his changes were conscientious, but that all of them were made at the most bitter sacrifice of personal feeling. His first inconsistency—on the currency question, in 1811—brought him into immediate and very unpleasant collision with his father, who even spoke before him in the debate; and it is understood that the old gentleman scarcely ever heartily forgave

his son for his change of opinion, either on this occasion or in 1829. Few men, indeed, ever made greater sacrifices than Sir Robert Peel to his views of public duty; for he deliberately sacrificed to them—what to minds as ambitious and as sensitive as his, is far dearer than place, or power, or popular applause and admiration—the attachment of his party, the good opinion of his personal friends. In 1829, he incurred — knowingly and manfully, though with acknowledged pain and reluctance—the reproaches and indignation of a great party, the fury of those bigots who had long regarded him as their safest and most presentable champion, the rupture of many private ties, the blame of many dear connections, and the representation of the University of Oxford, to which he had long clung with honourable pride, and which Canning had so ardently desired; and what, perhaps, to a proud man was worse of all, the humiliation of avowing an ignominious defeat, and the mistake and short-sightedness of years. "The tone of his observations," observes Mr Roebuck, "proved how acutely he felt the suffering of the fiery ordeal to which the indignation of his former friends had subjected him, how his mind still lingered about the objects of his former solicitude, and with what pain he divested himself of the character of the great Protestant leader."

"Allusion has been made," he said, indignantly, "to the sacrifice of the emoluments of office, which, it is insinuated, ought to have been preferred to the course I have adopted.

Good God! I cannot argue with the man who can place the sacrifice of office or emolument in competition with the severe, the painful sacrifice I have made—a sacrifice which it seems to be supposed I have consented to in order to retain my office. . . . Perhaps (he concluded) I am not so sanguine as others in my expectations of the future; but I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that I fully believe the adjustment of the question in the manner proposed, will give better and stronger securities to the Protestant interest and the Protestant establishment than any other that the present state of things admits of, and will avert evils and dangers impending and immediate. What motive, I ask, can I have for the expression of these opinions, but the honest conviction of their truth? . . . I well know I might have taken a more popular and selfish course. I might have held language much more acceptable to the friends with whom I have long acted and to the constituents whom I have lately lost. 'His ego gratiora dictu alia esse scio; sed me vera pro gratis loqui, et si meum ingenium non moneret, necessitas cogit. Vellem equidem vobis placere; sed multo malo vos salvos esse.'"

What it must have cost Sir Robert Peel, and what it did cost him, in pride, in affection, in repute, to break loose from his party in 1846, and propose the repeal of the corn laws, we can now fully estimate.[1] The

[1] Mr Disraeli, in his "Life of Lord George Bentinck," gives a graphic sketch of the memorable night when the Protectionists revenged themselves on their leader by voting with the Whigs on the Irish Coercion Bill, and so ejecting him from office. It was the evening when the repeal of the Corn Laws had finally passed the House of Lords:—

"At length, about half past one o'clock, the galleries were cleared, the division called, and the question put. . . . More than one hundred Protectionist members adhered to the minister; more than eighty avoided the division; nearly the same number followed Lord George Bentinck. But it was not merely their numbers that attracted the anxious observation of the Treasury bench, as the Protectionists passed in defile before the Minister to the hostile lobby. *It was impossible he could*

desertion of many with whom he had long acted—the rage of the country gentlemen whom he had disappointed—the bitter indignation of those whom he dragged over the grave of their pledges and their prejudices to support his new policy—the merciless sarcasms, the unsparing imputations of premeditated treachery, nightly cast at him by the impotent fury of the deceived, and the deep malignity of the baffled —altogether formed a combination of painful and

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have marked them without emotion—the flower of that great party which had been so proud to follow one who had been so proud to lead them. They were men, to gain whose hearts, and the hearts of their fathers, had been the aim and the exultation of his life. They had extended to him an unlimited confidence, and an admiration without stint; they had stood by him in the darkest hour, and had borne him from the depths of political despair to the proudest of living positions. Right or wrong, they were men of honour, breeding, and refinement, of high and generous character, and of good weight and station in the country, which they had ever placed at his disposal. They had been not only his followers, but his friends; had joined in the same pastimes, drank from the same cup, and in the pleasantness of private life had often forgotten together the cares and strife of politics.

"He must have felt something of this, while the Manners, the Somersets, the Bentincks, the Lowthers, and the Lennoxes, passed before him. And those country gentlemen — those 'gentlemen of England'—of whom but five years ago this very same building was ringing with his pride of being the leader—if his heart were hardened to Sir Charles Burrell, Sir William Joliffe, Sir Charles Knightly, Sir John Trollope, Sir Edward Kerrison, Sir John Tyrrell—he surely must have felt a pang when his eye rested on Sir John Yarde Buller, his choice and pattern country gentleman, whom he had himself selected and invited but six years back to move a vote of want of confidence in the Whig government, in order, against the feeling of the court, to instal Sir R. Peel in their stead."—P. 300.

formidable obstacles, which would have deterred from such a course any man who loved his country less, or valued his reputation and his comfort more. But he faced all with a grave and sorrowful fortitude, which has not been without its reward. The *nation* saw and appreciated the earnest and unselfish sincerity of the man; did full justice to the honesty of his purpose, and the difficult firmness of his resolution, and in the end placed him on a pinnacle of popularity achieved by no statesman since Lord Grey. Never has it been the fate of a statesman to do his duty to his country in the face of so many difficulties—difficulties, it is true, the main portion of which were created by his own antecedents—and at the cost of so complete a surrender of all that statesmen hold most dear. In the course of thirty years, he changed every opinion, violated every pledge, broke up every party, disappointed every prophecy, deserted every colleague whom he could not draw along with him; yet, in spite of all, at the time of his death he stood in public estimation and respect the unquestioned chief, *longo intervallo*, of all the statesmen of the day. And why was this?—but because it was clear to all that sincere conviction, and conscientious, unselfish devotion to his country's service, were throughout the actuating principles of his conduct—were at the bottom of every changed opinion, of every broken pledge, of every scattered combination, of every severed friendship, of every disappointed hope. It occurs to many public men to sacrifice place, power,

and friends to their principles and their faith : it was reserved to Sir Robert Peel to sacrifice to them his reputation—and this, not once, but time after time, —and yet to find it, like the widow's cruse, undiminished by the daily waste.

Of all Sir Robert Peel's conversions, his conversion to free trade and the repeal of the corn laws is the one which brought upon him the greatest obloquy and the heaviest charges, but we think with little justice. If, indeed, when he took office at the head of the Conservative party, in 1841, after ousting the Whigs —who, in their hour of danger and despair, had begun to tamper with the protection hitherto afforded to the agricultural and the colonial interests—he had already discerned the necessity, and made up his mind to the wisdom of a surrender, and yet led his party on to the attack, and assumed power in the name, and for the defence, of the old party,—then no language can be found severe enough to condemn such black and premeditated treachery. But there is not the slightest ground for believing this to have been the case. When, after the general election of 1841, he was summoned to take office by the large majority of a parliament elected under the combined influence of a general conviction of Whig incapacity and mismanagement—aided by the alarm created among the agriculturists by their proposal of a fixed duty, and among the West Indians by their attempt to reduce the differential duties on slave sugar—he found the country in a condition calling both for

immediate action to rescue it from misery and depression, and for a sincere and searching study of the causes which had plunged it into such adversity. The finances were deplorably dilapidated. The deficit was annual, and annually increasing; and the Whigs had tried in vain to cure it. The trade of the country was languishing, manufacturers were failing, many mills were closed, bread and meat were scanty and dear, want of employment and want of food were driving many to despair, and goading others into violence. Altogether, it was a gloomy period, the suffering and despondency of which are even now fresh and painful in our memory. It was one of those epochs which make all men earnest, and cause many to think and question who never thought or questioned before. Sir Robert Peel met parliament in the autumn, passed the necessary routine measures for the service of the country, and then steadily refused to give any intimation of the plans by which he proposed to meet the alarming state of matters, till he had had the five months of the recess for careful deliberation. Those months were spent by himself and his colleague, Sir James Graham, in anxious investigation and reflection. Few men are aware how effectually, in all worthy and honourable minds, the awful responsibilities of office during a time of national distress, crush and drive away all selfish and personal considerations; how they tear away the veil from the flimsy arguments which sufficed to answer an objection or silence an opponent; how they shrivel

into nothing the claims of consistency, the prejudices of connection, the pride of reputation; and how they *compel* the most sincere and laborious efforts to arrive at truth. The impression made upon the two leading ministers by that dreadful time never faded from their minds. Those who knew them then saw an unwonted gravity upon their faces. Those who knew them afterwards heard them say that no party or political considerations would induce them to risk the recurrence of such a period of suffering and gloom. It was the remembrance of 1842 that shaped their course in 1846; they saw a similar period approaching, and they dared not, and could not, meet it with *any* restriction on a starving nation's supply of food.

Sir R. Peel met parliament in 1842, with bold and statesmanlike proposals:—He saw that it was necessary to restore the finances, to relieve and unfetter industry, and to increase the supply of food for the people. So he imposed a property tax to enable him to modify a prohibitive and oppressive tariff; he greatly reduced the duties on the raw materials of manufacturers, and he admitted foreign cattle and meat at moderate rates of duty. Further than this he would not go; *because further than this he did not see his way.* His new corn law was scarcely an improvement on the old one; and he was aware of this himself. On that subject his opinions, though shaken, were still undecided. *He did not see his way;* and his language showed this. Those who reproached him with ignorance and cowardice for not

repealing the corn laws then, and those who reproached him with treachery and tergiversation for repealing them four years later, alike showed that they had not studied his career, and did not understand the peculiar character of his mind. He was, as a statesman, exactly what the English are as a nation. They are, in spirit, essentially Conservative. They instinctively venerate what is old, dread what is novel, mistrust what is untried. They are ever unwilling to make a change till unmistakable expediency or necessity forces it upon them. They hold by precedent and custom till the position in which these retain them has become no longer tenable or safe. They hate rash experiments, but they love substantial justice. Hence, during the greater part of his life, Sir Robert Peel was a man after their own heart. He was pre-eminently a *tentative,* not a scientific statesman. He had nothing of the political philosopher about him: he never formed a theory, and then followed it out systematically to its consequences; he always *felt his way.* He felt his way in criminal law reform; he felt his way in the concession of equal institutions to Ireland; he felt his way on the currency question; he felt his way in his financial measures; he felt his way in his liberal commercial policy. His first steps towards free-trade, in 1842, were made in doubt and trembling: it was obvious that he had no thorough confidence in the *principles* of the free-traders, and that he still thought there was much weight in the

reasonings and the fears of their antagonists, but he perceived that the effect might be serviceable, and it was desirable that the experiment should be tried; and it was not till he saw how buoyantly the commerce of the country sprang forward under the timid and tentative relief which he had given, showing that at least he had done no harm and made no mistake,—that he began to see his way more clearly, and to announce his opinions more courageously, and with fewer reservations and misgivings. Had bad harvests, instead of good ones, followed his first tamperings with the old protective tariff, and the distress of the country been exacerbated instead of being relieved, we believe he would have concluded that he had been wrong, and that the further alterations of 1843, and the systematic revision of 1845, would have been indefinitely postponed.

In the same way he proceeded with the corn laws. No one could see his countenance and hear his speech when, after six months of anxious reflection, he proposed his new scale of duties in 1842, without being convinced that he had begun to feel thoroughly doubtful of his ground:—the fearful distresses of his countrymen had compelled him to look into the subject more closely than he had ever done before, and to listen with more candour and attention to the reasonings of his opponents. The consequence was, that his mind became utterly unsettled; he had to propose a law at a time when his old views had been greatly shaken, but when the antagonistic views of the free-traders had not yet wrought full conviction:

hence he defended his measure by arguments wholly unworthy of an intellect like his, and for three years insisted on giving it a fair trial. But during all this period, as was evident from his altered and hesitating language, his mind was gradually ripening for the final change: it was impossible for him, charged as he was with the destinies of England, to sit night after night in the House of Commons, listening to the lucid expositions, the crushing logic, of the small but indefatigable band of the champions of commercial freedom, without finding first, doubt, then admiration and surprise, then conviction, successively creeping over him. We well remember, as he sat silent after one of the calm, clear, irrefutable speeches of Mr Cobden (regarding the effect of the corn laws on grazing and dairy farmers), which made an unwonted impression on the House,—the dismayed country gentlemen began to whisper anxiously from the back benches: "This will never do! Why don't Peel get up and answer him?" Sir Robert Peel turned half round and muttered in a low voice: "Those may answer him who can."

When his conversion was thus almost completed, came the memorable and terrible summer of 1845—incessant rain, a damaged and defective harvest, and the universal potato-rot—and the work was done. Peel felt that he dared not encounter another period of distress and scarcity with the corn laws still unrepealed: he saw starvation in prospect for Ireland, and possibly for England also; and he recognised the

impossibility of maintaining *any* impediments to the most unlimited supply of foreign food. The more he thought, the more he listened, the more he observed, —the clearer became his vision, and the more resolute his purpose. At the beginning of November he proposed to throw open the ports; but his colleagues were by no means unanimous, and he felt it was not a step to be taken with divided councils. Later in the month, Lord Morpeth joined the league: on the 22nd, Lord John Russell wrote his celebrated letter to the electors of London: he, too, like his great rival, was a convert to the pressure of the times and the arguments of the leaguers. A week after, Sir R. Peel resigned, after recommending the Queen to send for Lord John Russell, and placing in her Majesty's hands a written promise to assist his rival, by every means in his power, in effecting the now necessary settlement of this great question. The issue is well known: Lord John Russell could not form a ministry, and Sir R. Peel again took office with all his colleagues, except Lord Wharncliffe, who died, and Lord Stanley, whose prejudices were too stubborn to yield to facts, and whose heart was not yet touched by the prospective sufferings of his fellow-countrymen. He carried the repeal of the corn laws in the session of 1846, after a hard contest, and the most savage and bitter personal attacks, and then, according to a tacit understanding, gracefully laid down his power, and retired for ever from official life.

That a tentative and gradually progressive policy

like his, does not indicate the possession of the highest qualities of statesmanship, we readily concede. The merit of the prophetic mind that sees far into the future belongs not to Sir R. Peel. Few politicians ever read the present better, or the future less. He was clear-sighted, rather than far-sighted. "His life was one perpetual education," says Mr Disraeli. "He was not a rapid learner," observes Mr Roebuck, "but he was continually improving. He was ever ready to listen to the exposition of new ideas."—The truth is, as Mr Disraeli perceived, Sir R. Peel was not an *original* mind; he drew his inspiration from others. He was not of that order of great men who early embrace vast objects and prolific principles, inoculate the country with them, and educate the country up to them through long years of effort, obloquy, and misconstruction. He was not even of those who say, with Artevelde,—

> "I will not wait upon necessity,
> And leave myself no choice of vantage ground;
> But rather meet the times while still I may,
> And mould and fashion them as best I can."

He scarcely ever anticipated the verdict of the country; he was never too early; often too late. But when we reflect how great a change has of late years come over the political action of the country; how completely the general rules, and many even of the smaller details, of our policy are now decided by public opinion out of doors*; how entirely both

* Mr Disraeli, indeed, conceives that much of this change lies at the door of Sir Robert Peel. "No minister," he says, "ever

ministers and parliament have become mere instruments to legalise, embody, and execute those decisions to which the exertions of independent thinkers and associated bodies have gradually led the national mind,—it may be questioned whether a man who sympathises and adopts, is not more needed at the helm, in our times, than a man who initiates—still more than one who anticipates or misreads. The day is past when British rulers could govern according to the dictates of their own wisdom; nothing can now be done that the country is not ripe for; and a minister who is too forward for his age finds himself simply powerless.

"Had the intellect of Sir Robert Peel," says Mr Roebuck, "been of a bolder and more original cast, he would probably have been a less successful minister, as in that case he might often have proposed reforms before the nation was prepared to receive them, and thus have diminished his power as a minister while earning the renown of a philosopher. . . . The philosopher who discovers great truths, and collects the evidence by which they are eventually established, must be content to have his reward in the reverence and gratitude of posterity, and must be satisfied with the consciousness of the real value and importance of his discoveries. But the statesman, to be useful, must be powerful; and in a government like ours, and among a practical people like the English, the safest course

diminished the power of government in this country so much as this eminent man. No one ever strained the constitution so much. He was the unconscious parent of political agitation. He literally forced the people out of doors to become statesmen, and the whole tendency of his policy was to render our institutions mere forms." There is much truth in this: but surely the Whigs must share the guilt—if guilt there be—for what party of late years have so constantly compelled the country to modify their measures and make amends for their deficiencies

for a reforming minister is never to be before his age. Let him not be obstinately wedded to any views or opinions—let him be ever ready to hear, and carefully and respectfully listen to, all sides of every question—but let him religiously abstain from appropriating or assenting to any novel conception, until the public thoroughly understands and earnestly adopts it."—*Preface*, p. xix.

On one memorable instance, however, Sir Robert Peel hung back behind his age. He did not recognise the demand of the nation for reform, and when he did, he refused to bow to its wishes. He opposed the Reform Bill to the last; though when passed, he proclaimed it to be "a final and irrevocable settlement of a great constitutional question, which no friend to his country would attempt, directly or insidiously, to disturb;" and set himself diligently and with consummate sagacity to the task of reconstructing the disorganised Conservative party, on a basis suited to the altered circumstances of the times. Yet it is to be observed that no man contributed more largely to the success of the Reform Bill than Sir Robert Peel himself,—since, if it had not been for the breaking up of the Tory camp caused by his proceedings in 1829, that great measure could not have been carried, and indeed would never have been proposed. The effect, too, of the discussions on that measure, the conduct of the people regarding it, and their subsequent course at elections, in completing his political education, and making him thoroughly comprehend the middle classes, can scarcely be too highly estimated.

Mr Disraeli thus sums up his able and discriminating, but somewhat hostile, estimate of his great opponent :—

"One cannot say of Sir Robert Peel, notwithstanding his unrivalled powers of dispatching affairs, that he was the greatest minister this country ever produced; because, twice placed at the helm, and on the second occasion with the court and the parliament equally devoted to him, he never could maintain himself in power. Nor, notwithstanding his consummate parliamentary tactics, can he be described as the greatest party leader that ever flourished among us, for he contrived to destroy the most compact, powerful, and devoted party that ever followed a British statesman. Certainly, notwithstanding his great sway in debate, we cannot recognise him as our greatest orator, for in many of the supreme requisites of oratory, he was singularly deficient. But what he really was, and what posterity will acknowledge him to have been, is the greatest MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT that ever lived."

Mr Roebuck's estimate is juster and more comprehensive :—

"His strongest sympathies were with the nation, and not with a dominant section or party; and in this he was pre-eminently distinguished from the Whig statesman to whom he was through life opposed. . . . His conduct during his last administration, though it gave offence, never to be forgiven, to some of his immediate partisans, made him the most popular minister, and the most powerful statesman known in England since the days of the first William Pitt. The nation had confidence in his prudence; they believed him sincerely anxious to promote the welfare of his country, and to have real sympathies with the industrious millions of our people. There was a feeling, every day growing stronger, that he was destined to be *the people's minister*;—that he would be able, by means of popular support, to which at length he could alone look for aid, to depart from the rule by which the whole government of the country had hitherto been placed exclusively in the hands of the aristocracy, and to unite upon the Treasury bench a really national administration. . . . Entertaining

the hope that such was to be the ultimate mission of Sir Robert Peel, the nation looked with eager expectation to his future career. He rose in their affections in proportion as he lost the favour of his party, and was never so powerful as when by that party he was at last scouted, and deemed to be for ever dismissed."

This is quite true. During the four years that elapsed between his resignation of office and his death, he grew daily in intellectual and moral stature, and in favour with the great body of the people. For the first time in his long life he was free—unshackled by any party ties, and liberated from all embarrassing antecedents. He stood there as the great "Moderator"—a sort of consulting physician to the nation, to be called in when ordinary doctors were at fault. There was one service especially which it was hoped he might live to render. Rich in official experience, but unhampered by official connection—exempt from the snares and prejudices of ambition, because no ambition could aspire to a higher eminence than he had already reached—apart and aloof from all the embarrassments of party, since he had for ever and voluntarily ceased to be a leader—it was felt that he, and he only, was the statesman competent to examine and report upon the whole machine of our government—to point out the defects in its *system*, and to suggest the quarter in which a remedy was to be sought; in a word, to reform Downing Street, and recall both the Legislature and the Executive to their original and proper functions. To enter further upon this topic—prolific as it is—would lead us into a digression now, for which we have no space left.

We must conclude. When the Duke of Wellington, on receiving the melancholy tidings of Sir Robert Peel's death, emphatically pronounced him to be "the most honest man" he had ever known, the world was somewhat surprised at the peculiar terms of the eulogy. We were not. We can quite understand what the Duke meant. He intended to declare that in all his course his colleague had always appeared to him perfectly single-minded and conscientious. The praise was discriminating and deserved. We fully believe that Sir Robert Peel at all times did what he thought best for the country, according to his light and the scope of his vision; that whether he walked straightly or tortuously—whether he changed or persevered—whether he led his party or deserted them, he acted in each and every case as his conscience, in its then state of enlightenment, dictated.* He did this at the cost of much personal pain, for he was a man acutely sensitive to the opinions and feelings of those around him,—at once proud and sensitive. Therefore we place him morally, though perhaps not intellectually, in the very first rank of public men. Would that all had his singleness of mind, his genuine patriotism, his

* It is an interesting fact, and one that has come to us on high authority, that, for many of the latter years of his life, Sir Robert was in the invariable habit, at whatever hour he returned from Downing Street or the House of Commons, of reading for half an hour in some serious or religious book, before retiring to rest. It was only by this habit, he said, that he could keep his mind calm and clear after the distractions and irritations of the day.

honesty in seeking truth, his candour and courage in avowing error!

Sir Robert Peel was a scholar, and a liberal and discerning patron of the arts. He was a man of fine and sensitive organisation, and of judicious and ready benevolence. Though not social, he had many literary interests, and much elegant and cultivated taste. Possessed of immense wealth, with every source and avenue of pleasure at his command, it was no slight merit in him that he preferred to such refined enjoyment the laborious and harassing service of his country. He had his recompense. By his unblemished private character, by his unrivalled administrative ability, by his vast public services, by his unvarying moderation, he had inspired, not only England, but the world at large, with a respect and confidence such as few attain. After many fluctuations of repute, he had at length reached an eminence on which he stood—independent of office and of party—one of the recognised potentates of Europe; face to face, in the evening of life, with his work and his reward;—his work, to aid the progress of those principles on which, after much toil, many sacrifices, and long groping towards the light, he had at last laid a firm grasp; his guerdon, to watch their triumph and their influences. Nobler occupation man could not aspire to; sublimer power no ambition need desire; greater earthly reward, God, out of all the riches of his boundless treasury, has not to bestow.

V.

EMPLOYMENT OF OUR ASIATIC FORCES IN EUROPEAN WARS.[1]

THE startling and novel step—for which, like so many novelties, we are indebted to the erratic genius who rules our destinies at this critical conjuncture—of summoning our Asiatic subjects to fight our European foes, and (to borrow Canning's phrase) calling the East upon the scene to redress the menaced balance of the West, has roused the most thoughtful and suggestive of our journalists to discuss the secondary and remoter consequences of that measure. In a remarkable article full of foresight and reflection, which well merits the grave consideration of both patriots and statesmen, the *Spectator* points out how pregnant with the widest and mightiest results the proceeding may not impossibly turn out to be, and how essential it is that at the very outset England should clearly and thoroughly realise those speculative issues, and make up the national mind whether they are to be regarded as fraught with evil and danger, or with beckoning prospects of the most magnificent and dazzling order. In following out this prophetic vision, however, which

[1] *Fortnightly*, June 1878.

it does in a spirit of anxious and thoughtful inquiry, it commits itself to views both of morals and philosophy prevalent enough no doubt, but to my mind so very questionable, that a searching examination of them is greatly to be desired. One of the *Spectator's* positions I regard as utterly unsound; I am inclined to see hope and opportunities where it sees only peril and the probability of wrong; and the patriotic temper breathing through the article, while more moderate than is customary, seems curiously at variance with the advanced and daring doctrines generally promulgated in its columns.

We shall have to quote rather largely, but it is necessary to lay before our readers the entire substance of the argument we propose to question, and in the main to controvert.

"With an audacity which, as we frankly concede to those who follow him, has in it something splendid, Lord Beaconsfield has broken through the traditions of a century, has broken through them successfully, and has at a stroke changed all the relations previously existing between India and the United Kingdom. He has changed India from a far-away Empire, secluded in the depths of Asia, to a closely-connected dependency, situated for all purposes of practical politics, and especially for war, upon the Mediterranean. Talk of Russian intrusion into that sea, Lord Beaconsfield has brought India into it, with her whole army, and her boundless resources for the supply of men. In profound secrecy, without a previous vote of Parliament, without a hint being given to the people, while his leader in the Commons was pledging himself to the lips that nothing was being done, he has ordered the Indian Army into Europe, avowedly to fight a European people, and the Indian Army has obeyed him with delight. . . .

"So far as observers well accustomed to Sepoys can perceive,

there would be no difficulty, except money, in landing 60,000 native troops, officered, drilled, and provided like Europeans, in any part of the Mediterranean. We could conquer the Turkish Empire in Asia from the European side, and never expend an Englishman. . . .

"No such alteration in the position of this country as a fighting Power has occurred since she substituted Regular regiments for train-bands and feudal retainers, and it involves the entire future relation of the English people to themselves and to the world. . . .

"We are constrained to believe, and we would gladly believe the contrary, that it will affect those relations for evil. We cannot think it well for any nation to be able to fight by deputy, to be able to wage war without making sacrifices, to be able to win territories for themselves through the aid of men who have no control over their policy, and who are not to be responsible for the successes they achieve—and we believe such a position especially bad for the English people. Already the worst tendency of that people is the one we may call the Carthaginian—the desire for empire to be created by mercenary swords. They have fought their greatest campaigns by the aid of subsidised allies. They have resolutely rejected a conscription, so resolutely that, by a strange perversion of ideas, they have boasted of their freedom from it as if it were a proof of superior virtue. They have refused even to submit to the universal military training which every statesman among them of both parties would, if it were politically safe to speak out, tell them was directly for their good —would make them healthier men, more active men, and men with more capacity for command, for obedience, and for organisation. With the employment of the natives of India as Imperial troops, the grand restraints on the English haughtiness and disposition to crush down instead of conciliating opposition will be removed. . . .

"We cannot believe that a power so terrible, and to be used with so little responsibility to its subjects, can be trusted to any government or any nation without moral and political deterioration. The single check on the military governments of the Continent, the one barrier against grand wars of aggrandisement, is that the army is the nation, that if Prince Bismarck, or Prince Gortschakoff, or M. Gambetta engage in wars of conquest, they must conquer by expending those who ultimately rule them.

The English people are about to throw even that check away, and embark on huge enterprises in the security, or at least in the belief that they have behind them the soldiers of a continent whom they rule, but who are not themselves, to whom they need only give pay and honours. That the men come voluntarily, willingly, even delightedly to the work does not alter the case, which is this,—that they are not us, that the burden of the sadness of their loss does not fall on English homes. Take them in the very best point of view, a true point, it would seem, for the hour, as our willing allies, and still they relieve us of a strain which, if it ought to be borne, ought to be borne alone by the nation which decides that it has to be endured. There are no allies on earth to whom a people like the English, with their secular history of effort and of freedom, ought to entrust their work. There is in the whole arrangement a shifting of the burden from the rulers on to their dependants, a reliance on expense as an equivalent for self-sacrifice, a postponement of national duty for the sake of national ease, which can produce no good. Can it be well that at this moment, when temper and reason are still struggling, that the second restraining force should be removed, that they should be reminded that they can dispose of other races than their own, that they have a recruiting-ground in Asia which costs them nothing but money, and which cannot be exhausted? We say nothing of what appears to us the wickedness of ruling India because Europe is nobler than Asia, and then calling in Asia to beat down Europe; nothing of the fierce jealousy which all Europe will henceforth feel of our possession of the mighty Empire at last brought home to its doors—an Empire which, if its people will fight on our side, becomes a seventh Great Power, stronger for invasion than any of the six, except, perhaps, Germany—and confine ourselves to the single and, as we believe, unanswerable question,—Is it well, for the sake of success in a single quarrel, to deteriorate the nation, to make universal military training impossible, to rely on Asiatic swords instead of our own, to sink from the Roman position, of which we were so proud, to the Carthaginian? The nation seems for the moment intoxicated with its new strength, but when the statesmen meet again, we trust that among them, at least, we shall find a few who can think of the future as well as the present, and plead that national strength can never be found in a measure which, so far as it succeeds, must emasculate the national character.

The first comment we have to make is, that the *Spectator* not only condemns Englishmen for declining to submit the whole youth of the nation to that "universal military training" which is the fashion and the law elsewhere, and which, our Contemporary maintains, is judged by every statesman of all parties to be politically desirable, and indeed essential, both in a social, personal, and even moral point of view—but goes on to blame them in the most decided terms for that obstinate "perversion of ideas" which makes them insist on raising their standing armies by voluntary enlistment, instead of by obligatory and forcible conscription, according to the example set us by the military empires and republics of the Continent. Now the former doctrine we shall not here elaborately controvert; we may even admit that the adoption of the training recommended would be attended with some incidental and collateral gains, though at the cost of risking or surrendering a certain portion of our industrial supremacy, already gravely menaced. But we cannot but think that the view in question springs from hasty and partial consideration. The *Spectator* overlooks one of the most undesirable, and yet inevitable, consequences of the system it recommends. Military training cannot fail to generate military tastes; you cannot create warlike discipline and habits without at the same time fostering warlike ideas; it is idle and shallow, it seems to us, to fancy that you can make a camp life, habituation to arms and tactics, direct preparation, that is, for the work of fighting

and slaughter (for, in plain terms, it means this, if it means anything serious at all) the earliest and most universal occupation of the young citizen in his most plastic years, the indispensable preliminary to all the other various businesses of life, without instilling into his mind the notion that antagonism, conflict, and campaigning are likely enough to be the paramount, and may be the most sacred, as they can easily become the most welcome, functions claimed for him by the State. You say to the youth as soon as he comes forth from school and college, teeming with fun, overflowing with energy, eager for adventure, "First of all you must be ready to fight, you must qualify yourself to fight well, and to fight against any one whom your country or your colonel tells you to regard as an enemy;"—and then you fancy that after a couple of years spent in learning this lesson, and learning it in daily companionship with hundreds of others as busy with it as himself, he will not have taken to the trade with zeal, and like it better than the more laborious and less exciting callings by which bread is to be earned, families maintained, and the nation carried forward in its progress. Is there foresight, is there wisdom, is there even sound sense or solid morals in proposing thus to arouse and engrain in the natures of the whole coming generation those sentiments of Chauvinism, ambition, and aggrandisement, so easily disguised under the names of patriotism and preparation, which now on the Continent are keeping millions under arms, which engross half the engineering talent of the

time in devising weapons for mutual destruction, and which we are beginning dimly to recognise as constituting the curse and opprobrium of our age? If there is a nation in Europe qualified by its blessed insularity, its dawning morality, its incipient perceptions of what is truly great and wise to give a new direction to the march of human progress, that nation surely is our own; and yet we are urged quite gratuitously, and apparently in the pure excitement of the imitative spirit, to throw aside our noble possibilities and to follow the vulgar example of military monarchies elsewhere, who have neither our rare exemptions nor our loftier aims.

The *Spectator* has never been distinguished for its pacific temper, but at least it has always taken a high moral tone, and in dealing with political questions has been prone to consider, more than most journals, what was right or wrong rather than what was expedient or the contrary. It has usually gone in for resolute conscientiousness—often for downright Christianity; and no public instructor has preached the *Fiat justitia ruat cœlum* with sterner courage. Therefore we are the more surprised at finding our high-minded guide appearing as an enthusiastic votary not only of universal military training as the most obligatory part of the curriculum of national education, but of imperative and inescapable conscription as the fittest mode of recruiting our standing armies. We have always understood that if there be one thing indisputably wicked, it is to take human life otherwise than in

self-defence, or by necessity, or in a righteous quarrel; that to slaughter, and to slaughter wholesale, men who have done you no wrong, against whom you feel no anger, and with whom you were the best of friends but yesterday, is to commit this *primâ facie* wicked action in its most succinct and naked form; and that to do all this at the command of your superior in military rank or administrative position, of whom you ask no questions and upon whose wisdom, justice, or temper, you have no reason to place reliance, is if possible an aggravation of the criminality of the original proceeding. An army collected and officered by voluntary enlistment is composed either of men so unthinking, and with the moral sense so unawakened or so inchoate, that the reality of the position in which they have placed themselves has never presented itself to their imagination; or of those who, by a process of sophistry which they call reasoning, have persuaded themselves that it is their duty to serve their country in this anomalous fashion, and in this special and probably congenial office; that it is for their rulers—wise or foolish, good or bad—to determine the righteousness of the war, and for themselves to obey blindly and never suffer the question of right or wrong to present itself to their thoughts and disturb the concentrated simplicity and effectiveness of their violence; or perhaps that the entire sinfulness of the act—if sinfulness there be, as there usually is—lies with those who give the command, and not with those who execute it; so that neither generals nor soldiers, but

only the Sovereign or the Cabinet, incur the faintest responsibility here or risk of punishment hereafter, however oppressive, iniquitous, scandalous, and sanguinary the war and its details may be. Somehow or other these men contrive to satisfy their consciences, incomprehensible as the *modus operandi* may appear to us: those who believe in inherited guilt and altruistic punishment and imputed righteousness and vicarious redemption, may conceivably count upon vicarious damnation likewise; and thus go to the soldier's massacre or the soldier's grave with the *cœur léger* of Emile Ollivier, or the glowing enthusiasm of the undoubting Islamite. They must settle the matter with themselves, do the questionable duty they have chosen, and accept the consequences they have incurred —or determined to ignore. They have voluntarily selected their career; it has not been forced upon them from above, or *ab extra*, or by lot.

But in the case of an army raised by conscription, this cannot be said. The precise opposite must in thousands of instances be true. The ballot is no respecter of persons—still less of consciences or convictions. Troops collected by lot will contain even now numbers who hate war, some who believe it in any circumstance to be wrong, far more who know that in nine cases out of ten it is foolish, and who believe it in five cases out of six to be distinctly and flagrantly unjust, a positive sin on the part of those who bring it about, or who suffer it by carelessness or clumsiness to come about, a sin (only less grievou

possibly because veiled or clouded by the perplexity of conflicting duties) in those who aid it and enact it by becoming its reluctant and saddened instruments. The number who hold these sentiments in the innermost recesses of their nature is increasing year by year. It is the aim and the function of our moralists and preachers, of many of our wisest statesmen, and of hundreds of our economists and public writers, to swell this number: even the *Spectator*, bellicose as its instincts are, has often, with pardonable inconsistency, laboured for this end; and it is impossible to doubt, in spite of the attitude of Europe at the present hour, that this condemnation of war in all but the most rare and exceptional contingencies—that is in defence of the rights, the liberties, the duty or the honour of the assailed—will spread as sense and civilisation make way among mankind, will become the mark and the measure of that civilisation for which we are all really or nominally striving; and that this condemnation will ere long deepen and intensify into general abhorrence. Yet what are the advocates of conscription contending for? Simply for a law which, by force and under severe penalties, shall compel all those increasing thousands—the *élite*, be it remembered, and the beckoning examples of their fellow-men, those who feel already as we trust we may all feel in time—to inflict what they know to be a wrong, to commit what they believe to be a crime, and to do this under the peremptory orders of men whom they regard as utterly mistaken, and have ample

reason to fancy both incompetent and passionate, and perhaps self-seeking and unconscientious into the bargain. There is no escape, no refuge, no alternative for the victims thus cruelly "impressed" into the service. They may not resign; they cannot desert—that is dishonour; they cannot refuse—that would be flogging, branding, or disgraceful death—death which few would have the courage to canonize as martyrdom. The case is so grave, the elements of the question so undeniable, the public conscience is already so far partially awakening, that even now a few of the more excitable of our eminent divines are venturing to pronounce that in an unjust war (which they believe the menaced one to be) those who think as they think ought to "throw up their commissions," and refuse to fight. But what officer dare—perhaps we might ask what officer *could*—resign his commission on the eve of a campaign, any more than a naval captain could unbelt his sword and go below when alongside of the enemy's ship, and so avoid participation in his country's sin? Probably we might ask more pertinently, What officer has a right to retire from the service because he believes this special service to be iniquitous and criminal? His scruples should have come to him much earlier. When he entered the service he bound himself to obey his Sovereign's orders without distinction of innocence or guilt. He bartered away once for all, and without a hesitation, a murmur, or a thought, "his right of refusing to do wrong." Again: is there to be no consideration for

the private who has been forced into the ranks by the conscription which our illogical moralists are so zealous to establish? The dilemma comes upon him, as well as upon his colonel, as the Scripture says, "like pain upon a woman in travail, and there is no escape."

But conscription is not only indefensible as being immoral: I believe it to be wasteful and unscientific, and therefore unstatesmanlike as well. It is a scheme which neglects and abuses the resources of the country. There are to be found among us in teeming thousands men who could serve the State excellently as soldiers, and who can be made useful to it in no other way—the roughs, the reckless, the idle, the incurably impetuous, the insatiably adventurous, those to whom a life of steady industry is an abomination and almost an impossibility, those who are not exactly bad, but pretty certain to become bad if left to themselves. To these men the profession of a soldier would be genial in everything except its discipline, and discipline is precisely what they need, and cannot do without. Their exuberant energies, a curse to the community otherwise, would be utilised in uniform. They are nearly certain to become criminals if they are not made recruits. If you do not enlist them in the ranks you may lay your account for maintaining them for half their life in gaol;—if you do you would make them patriots instead of prisoners—not to dwell on the economical consideration that you can maintain them more cheaply in the barrack than in the penitentiary. But there is a further reflection which,

with many minds, will weigh yet heavier—*you will be raising them enormously in the moral as in the social scale.* To the industrious peasant or the skilful artisan, more obviously and deplorably still to those better natures whom a blind conscription would sweep into the ranks, the career of the private soldier would be a step downwards, and might be moral ruin: to the rough and the potential malefactor it would be a step upwards, possibly salvation. Those who have contrasted the drafted militia-man or the raw recruit lounging into the depôt, with the same man after six months' discipline, are often astounded at the metamorphosis that short time has wrought; and with the great majority of these subjects the stern discipline of the drill sergeant is the only schooling adequate or suitable to their vehement natures. The rough, who, left to run wild, would rapidly have developed into the ruffian, learns as a soldier to serve the community he would otherwise have preyed upon, and acquires that self-respect which is the first step to good, and may even, among the possibilities of war, earn success and distinction which will make a man of him for ever. It is strange that this view of the subject, obvious enough, one would suppose, should have been so habitually overlooked by our "world-betterers," and that these abounding and appropriate resources for our national defence, this social *muck*—"wealth in the wrong place" (to borrow the metaphor of Lord Palmerston)—should have been regarded as mere "muck" to be got rid of.

So much for the rank and file of our standing armies. The officers are to be found just as easily and to be utilised just as well. The raw material for command and guidance, as well as for disciplined obedience and courage, is to be found among us in equally rich abundance, only we have to look for it in other quarters. The rough among the mass has his analogue in the higher orders, and in ample numbers, only he is an improved specimen and is called by another name. No country in the world, perhaps, so swarms with idle "swells," capable of good, but doomed, too probably, by surrounding circumstances, to evil—with their faces set less towards Jerusalem than towards Jericho. The families both of the nobility and gentry, and of those who aspire to be classed with them, and are often quite as wealthy, abound with young men following no calling or profession and exempted by parental riches from the necessity of working for a living, yet not endowed with that particular kind of property which of itself entails and constitutes an occupation, who begin life with nothing to do, and before long find that nothing rather burdensome and very dangerous; energetic, athletic, and courageous, hating study and stagnation, eager for adventure, fit for command or competent to learn it through the channel of obedience, prone to mischief, not unlikely to become noxious, and often worthless and contemptible as well; doing harm, and often great harm, simply because they have literally no scope for the overflowing energies and hidden capabilities

of a magnificent physique. These are precisely the natures of whom first-rate officers ought to be made; who should become officers just because there is no other career or profession open to them and suited for them; who are neither clever enough nor disposed enough for sedentary toil to be attracted to the Bar, nor sober and grave enough to be fitted for the Church, but who at the head of a regiment in active service would be accurately in their place, and who, if they are not there, will dawdle through life wasting it, scarcely enjoying it, perhaps even disgracing both talents and opportunities, mere sportsmen in their youth, mere club-saunterers when age comes. To men of this class a commission in the army, especially in regiments intending service or in scientific corps, would be absolute redemption; and no one who is not acquainted with the circles of society in which they swarm, can know either what thousands of them there are, what splendid commanders many of them might be made, nor how utterly incapable any other school than the army would prove to make the great majority of them what they ought to be. Such men, it would seem, ought to be *enticed* into the service, not deterred from it at the threshold by needless or inappropriate intellectual requirements. It would suffice that the demands as to capacity and conduct should be adequate, and that the purely *professional* teaching and discipline should be thorough and sagacious. In a word, we would endeavour to *utilise* the idle, the adventurous, and the energetic in

the higher and the lower ranks alike—to get service out of those who will be the enemies of society if you do not make them its defenders—to get out of them the sole and the special service they are qualified to render—and to get them by voluntary enlistment (which has never failed us yet), and not by the sweep of a drag-net which collects the unwilling and incompetent at random.

Of course if the system of *remplaçants* be admitted, if those on whom the lot has fallen are allowed to purchase substitutes, and conscription be mitigated or virtually annulled by so inconsistent a contrivance, the chief objections to it fall to the ground. But then the arguments which recommend it to the popular fancy fall to the ground also, and a new set of dissuasives come to the front. What becomes of the merit or equity of a function, obligatory on all citizens without distinction, which yet can be discharged by deputy, of a duty which can be evaded by a money payment, of a theoretically universal burden which yet practically falls upon the poor alone? Is there in any land a more monstrous partiality recognised by law? Yes; perhaps there is one yet stronger, and it arises out of the identical arrangement. Where else have we *a tax levied by lot?* What should we think of *decimating* the importers of tea or tobacco, for example, to determine which of them should pay the custom's duty? Or to settle which of a dozen publicans shall be mulcted for an excise license? Yet how, in principle, would such a system differ from an appeal to

the ballot-box to ascertain who, out of a thousand youths just completing their twentieth year, shall either be drafted into an unwelcome profession, or pay twenty guineas for exemption? Wherein would consist the sagacity or the justice of drawing lots among citizens, all equal in the eye of the law, as to which of them shall and which shall not contribute, in purse or person, to the treasury of their common country?

There is logic and there is equity in a system like that of Germany, which makes every man without exception a soldier for a given portion of his life, whatever deterring considerations may be urged against it. But I can recognise neither wisdom nor justice in a law which leaves to mere blind chance the decision who shall risk his life for his native land, who shall swell its revenue, and who shall escape either obligation. Necessity might drive a nation to measures so anomalous, but of such necessity there is no question here.

The principal grounds on which we are inclined to join issue with the *Spectator* as to the propriety of employing our Indian troops in our imperial and European wars may be gathered from the above reasoning. We agree that it is the commencement of a new line of action, a line which is capable of indefinite extension, and one, therefore, which should be maturely and dispassionately weighed, and not adopted on a sudden emergency, or at the bidding of

mere Executive caprice. It is arguable enough, and probably true, that this particular action of the Cabinet involves a stretch of the royal prerogative, in some points questionable and indecorous, and probably transgressing the limits of the constitution. This, however, if the country so decide, can easily be rectified for the future by regular parliamentary proceeding. We feel, too, that the practice—if it once became a practice—might open upon our Eastern Empire financial complications, and possibly also serious danger—danger which experienced Indian statesmen are not disposed to underestimate. It may be perilous to drain Hindostan periodically of *corps d' armée* that might be needed on the spot; and in order to escape this risk we should probably be induced to maintain our Indian forces at a strength not required by Indian needs, and therefore not justly chargeable on Indian resources—which, indeed, could not bear them, and ought not to be strained to bear them. It might also be dangerous, it is supposed, to our now recognised, unquestioned, and *peaceful* supremacy in that anomalous portion of the British Empire, to accustom native tribes and troops, disciplined and warlike, whom we have conquered and taught to feel our superiority, and trained under British officers to subdue all Oriental foes—to accustom these to meet on equal terms and defeat white forces, among which might be some of the best regiments of European monarchies. The Oriental imagination is vivid and not altogether without a rude logic

of its own; and these troops, returning home flushed with victory and thirsting for action might, it is conceived, forgetting the warning memories of 1857, begin to fancy that their English leaders and fellow-soldiers might not be more unconquerable than their Russian foes, and might, with or without real provocation, grow more turbulent and formidable than they have been hitherto. At all events, these forces —scores of thousands probably enough, no longer wanted, would be difficult and costly to keep in idleness, and yet not safe to disband—would inevitably, deal with them as we pleased, be a fresh embarrassment added to our many Indian problems. These considerations, admittedly grave ones, and of pressing practicality, we do not propose to discuss; they lie beyond our present range of vision.

But the *Spectator*, and many of our more reflective politicians besides, see a wider and deeper mischief in the distance—two distinct mischiefs indeed; mischiefs which, if real, are assuredly not to be made light of or ignored. They believe that the use of Indian troops—who are ready and anxious to fight, who fight well, and who can be had to fight in any numbers—would, once inaugurated, be resorted to on all occasions, and would thus accustom us to depend on mercenaries, and, rapidly and certainly, make Englishmen the purse-proud snobs it is always in them to become. They fear, further, that the possession of these almost inexhaustible military resources, costing us nothing but their pay and their commissariat, would render Great

Britain the meddlesome bully of Europe, and perhaps the oppressor of our colonies as well; in a word, that having boundless power, we should be prone to trust to this power instead of to the equity of our rule or the righteousness of our cause. Do these surmises point to true rocks ahead or merely fanciful ones? And if real, what antagonistic considerations have to be set against them? Let us deal with the last foreboding to begin with. We think it may be dealt with briefly. Indeed, it strikes us as all but imaginary.

In the first place the argument appears to be erroneous *au fond.* It is analogous to that which used to be so favourite a one with the Manchester School of Economists in their younger days, and which is not wholly out of currency even now: "Don't trust the Ministers with money—they are certain to misuse it. They are incurable spendthrifts—only by reducing their allowance can you keep them within bounds at all. Cut down the Budget to the lowest limit, even at the risk of cutting into the quick—because only thus can you exercise any check on wasteful and mischievous expenditure." Now surely this style of reasoning should be out of date. I think we have reached that stage of political training when we need not curtail our means lest we should apply them wrongfully. We ought to have at least power to do our duty, and to trust to our morals and our sense not to abuse that power. We ought to have outgrown that period of political infancy, when we need to be kept poor and weak, lest we should squander our riches and

prostitute our strength. I am even disposed to think that some among us have occasionally been too much influenced by the feeling, when called upon for action, "Oh! we cannot afford this, or we must not risk that,"—sentiments which are scarcely seeming in a great nation or in a high-minded statesman. I do not believe that there is the slightest danger lest our boundless command of Indian troops should induce us to conquer or control the Kaffirs of the Cape or the negroes of Jamaica by the strong arm instead of by righteous, considerate, and judicious government. I am not sure that there has not sometimes been an inclination, half soft, half stingy, to meet turbulence and rebellion rather by temporising than by firm resistance. and thorough and conclusive measures. I am quite sure that in the present temper of our moralists in the press and our Radicals in the House of Commons, to say nothing of the too frequent line of criticism adopted by whichever party happens to be "her Majesty's Opposition," there is quite enough to prevent the governors of our dependencies, or the generals they employ, from venturing on proceedings which are fairly assailable on the grounds of humanity or justice. Probably the danger is, in these days when military daring is so common and civil courage so rare, lest those who serve their country in high command and in trying emergencies, should consider rather what proceedings will be approved at home and be defensible in Parliament, than what would be most suitable for the aim in view, and therefore pro-

bably in truth most right, kind, and wise. With regard, again, to our action in the angry controversies which break out from time to time in Europe, we may, I think, be satisfied at last that—thanks to the high, if not always sound or sober, tone taken by several of our more Christian and sympathetic statesmen, whom probably it would be invidious to name—thanks also to the Press, which (with exceptions, no doubt) has seconded their remonstrances so well—the moral sensibilities of England have become so awakened, if we may not say enlightened, that it would be next to impossible for any government to drag us into a war, or enterprise, or course of conduct which was distinctly unrighteous or overbearing, and could be shown to the prevailing sense and conscience of the nation to be such. And it is somewhat curious and startling to find the *Spectator* thus anxious to tie our hands and impair our powers of doing whatever we deem it our duty to do without counting the difficulty or the cost —the *Spectator* which, with all its merits, has at least never been non-intervening or pacific, but rather perhaps over-prompt to rouse the sleeping vigilance of Britain against the first symptoms of encroachment—to embrace every generous cause in any quarter however distant, to make herself the righter of every wrong, and the champion of the oppressed throughout the world. I may be short-sighted, I may be partial, but I sincerely believe that if there be any nation which can be safely trusted with the power to work its will, to do what it deems right and beneficent

according to the measure of its lights (often limited, coloured, and refracted beyond question), that nation is our own. Now, at least, amid all our failures and mistakes, we *try* to act fairly towards those we deal with; we endeavour to rule with equity, and with a genuine desire to do them good, those who are committed to our sway; and we doubt whether the same can be said of any other State.

In answer to the other class of arguments so forcibly urged by the *Spectator*, we have to plead that, while recognising to the full the risk and the ignominy of a nation, either from weakness, laziness, or luxury, committing its defence to aliens and hirelings, we dispute the analogy of the cases and the relevancy of the warning. In the first place the Sikhs and other warlike tribes of India under our sway are not "mercenaries" in any strict sense of the word. The epithet is scarcely more applicable to them than to the Celts of Ireland or to the Highlanders of Scotland, who were subdued, indeed, far earlier, but who were our enemies once, and some of whom are hardly amalgamated yet, but who fight side by side with the Saxon portion of our armies, and who have served us with equal loyalty and courage. Our coloured Indian forces are the subjects of our Sovereign as much as our Canadian or Australian brethren—perhaps even more so, for these are self-governing colonists, which the Indians are not—and would, it is believed, fight for their "Empress" with unquestioned fidelity and zeal. They are paid, no doubt, for their services, just as our recruits at

home are paid, but these services are voluntarily rendered in both instances alike. Being our subjects, and having entered the military profession by choice, and agreeing gladly and eagerly to follow our lead to any country and to support us against any foe, we consider that we are entitled to avail ourselves of their services as freely as we should those of our volunteers at home or the regiments which might be offered to us by New Zealand or the Dominion—holding that the duties of British subjects are as wide as the dangers of the British empire, and that all the races Britain governs and protects may be righteously called upon to share in her defence. We cannot echo the sentiment so eloquently dwelt on by the writer we are controverting, that there is something unworthy in "a people like the English, with their secular history of effort and of freedom," entrusting their tasks to others, to allies, however eager, reliable, and competent; nor can we share the fear he intimates, but scarcely feels, lest, Carthaginian-like, we should grow *soft*, and become fond of doing all our rougher work by deputy. The troops whom we *use* we should command and *lead* as well; and the expectation that the soldiers would ever learn to despise or desire to resist the British officers who have shared with them the dangers of the battle, the glory of the victory, and "the rapture of the strife," we may be allowed to look upon as fanciful. Equally are we inclined to treat as fanciful the probability that either the upper or the lower classes of our race will ever be cured of their

combative propensities, grow tired of fighting, or become purified and elevated enough in tone and temper to be averse from fighting when a cause presents itself good and great enough to fight for. At least we have as yet seen no indications of any change in the national character like that.

Nor, finally, are we inclined to treat as very serious or very imminent the danger lest we should grow careless or criminally lavish of our subjects' blood in war, because that blood was Indian and not English, though we may not regard that risk as quite imaginary. But the efforts of moralists should be directed, it appears to us, to raise the intellects of statesmen, and to enlighten the consciences of the people, rather than to cripple the nation's capacity to execute the nation's will. When our rulers and our senators have realised that to shed one drop of blood needlessly or unjustly is a sin for which history will make them answerable, and equally a sin whosoever be the veins from which that blood may flow, the guarding and restraining doctrine wanted will have been learned. And surely in an age of progress and reflection so simple a principle ought not to be so difficult to reach. Nor do we believe that even now the politicians could be found among us who (consciously at least) would give their vote for war if it could be fought with Sikh troops, and for peace if English ones were indispensable.

To conclude then :—notwithstanding warning considerations which we admit it may be wise to weigh,

yet as a matter of sound principle the correctness of which we cannot question, as statesmen and as moralists alike, we give our voice for employing our Indian forces in European action to whatever extent may be found necessary. Having this superb strength in reserve, we see no moral reasons to deter us from using it to the fullest extent in every adequate emergency and in every righteous cause. If war is justifiable it should be waged *cum toto corpore regni*. It is weak and senseless to go into battle with hands tied and weapons left at home. We reach this conclusion by three paths; *first*, because it is wise and sound economy to use all members of the community in those functions for which they have a special aptitude; *secondly*, because in the case of those occupations which to some seem questionable, but which circumstances may render essential, it is surely wise and just to assign them to those classes who can discharge them with the greatest readiness, the most complete absence of scruple, and therefore the least wear and tear of the moral sense; and *thirdly*, because we eschew as utterly false and shallow that principle of political action that desires us to be feeble in order to make us harmless, and would disable us from doing what *the nation* deems right lest we should be tempted to do what *they* deem wrong;—the doctrine of those who are so convinced of the inherent wrong-headedness of both Government and people that they would keep England weak for fear she might be mischievous if strong, and are content to curtail our

power of doing good as the only conceivable means of preventing us from doing evil.

That the influence of Great Britain in the Areopagus of Europe has been greatly augmented at this crisis by the knowledge that she has the vast military strength of India at command, and is prepared, if called upon, to use it, is, we apprehend, indisputable; and the danger, which we dispute as little, that our Government have shown an inclination to use this reserve of force in an unwise and unrighteous quarrel, is a reason for controlling or changing our rulers, but scarcely for renouncing our power.

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